FREE! 64 PAGE BOOK + £140 OF FULL PROGRAMS ON THE CD

TRANSFORM YOUR SITE! 12 AMAZING GADGETS: PAGE 56

Practical internet

SORTED: YOUR 50 WORST NETMARES

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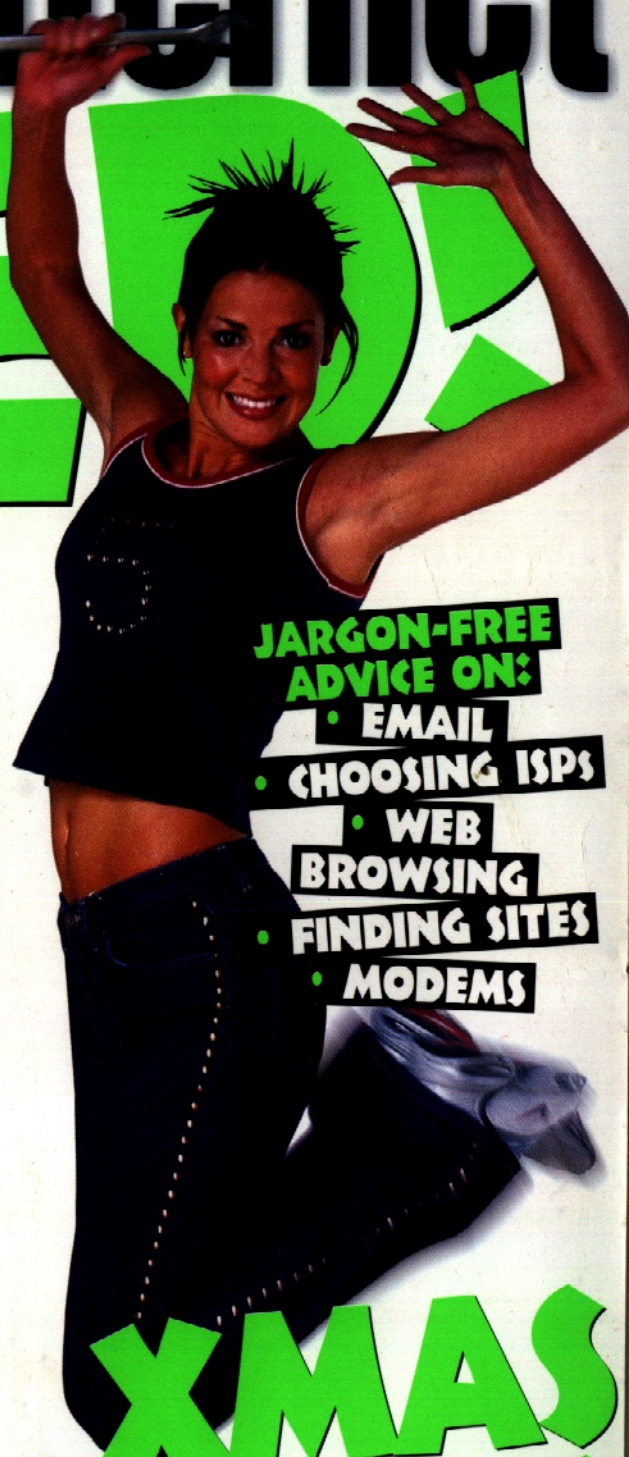

BEAT ONLINE PRANKSTERS

How to spot the Web's cleverest scams and hoaxes before you become a victim

WIN! A WEB SERVER WORTH £10,000 FROM WEB FUSION SEE PAGE 55

JARGON-FREE ADVICE ON:
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- CHOOSING ISPS
- WEB BROWSING
- FINDING SITES
- MODEMS

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GET MORE FROM OUTLOOK EXPRESS, FLASH 5, GOLIVE 5 & PHOTOSHOP

BRAND NEW NET GEAR TESTED

DIGITAL CAMERAS

WEB CAMS

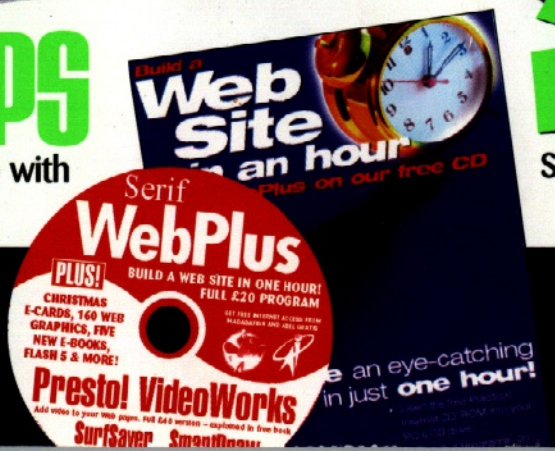
XMAS BARGAINS

ON PAGE 48

Save money and avoid the queues with our ultimate Net gift-buying guide

ONLINE SOAPS

Forget EastEnders, get lathered up with the Web's hottest soap storylines!



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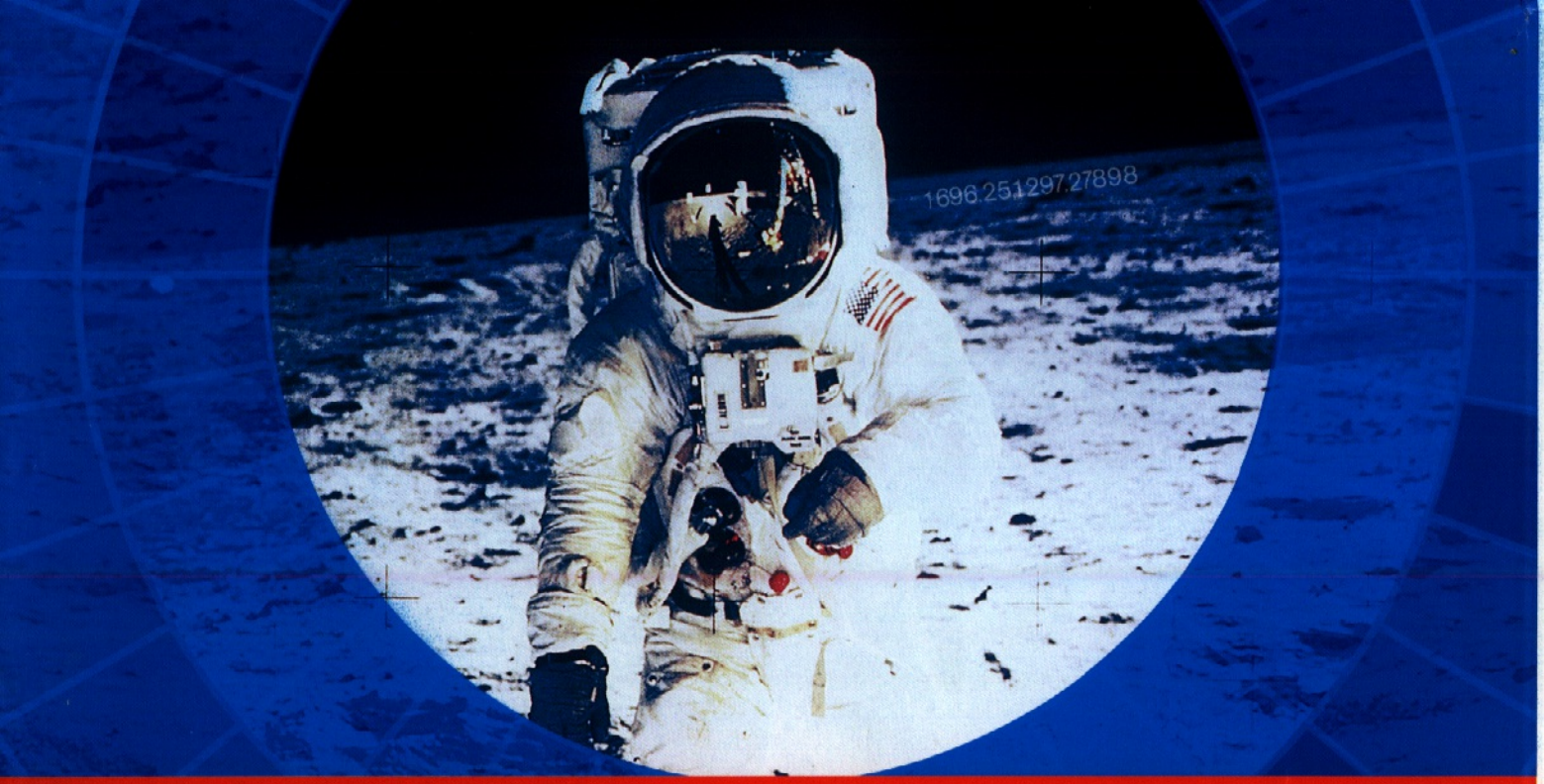

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MEET THE TEAM...

THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE UK'S LEADING NET MAGAZINE, PRACTICAL INTERNET

Thomas Watson

TECHNICAL EDITOR

Our grinning, tartan-clad technical expert loves tinkering with the latest gizmos, gadgets and software. He tells you in no-nonsense terms what's hot and what's not

Robin Lewis

FEATURES EDITOR

Tim Henman lookalike Robin is an ace at serving up great features – all aimed at helping you get more from your Net connection and saving you money in the process

James Seabright

WEB SITE DESIGN SPECIALIST

Web guru and travelling thespian, James offers readers essential advice on how to create great-looking Web pages and graphics with the absolute minimum of fuss

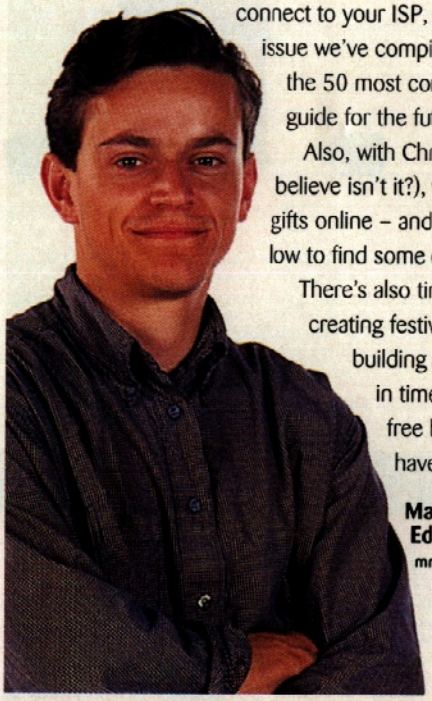
HOME PAGE

The life-saving issue!

WELCOME TO DECEMBER'S *Practical Internet*. Whether you're a long-time surfer or a Net newcomer, you'll find this issue an essential read. Everyone suffers problems with their Internet connections from time to time – whether your email's gone haywire, you can't connect to your ISP, or your modem's ready to explode – so in this issue we've compiled a complete trouble-shooting guide solving the 50 most common Net problems. Use it as a handy reference guide for the future or solve your existing problems immediately.

Also, with Christmas just around the corner again (hard to believe isn't it?), we show you how to use the Net to buy your gifts online – and save a packet. We've scoured the Web high and low to find some of the best-value presents around. See page 48.

There's also timely advice on party planning (page 68), creating festive eCards (page 78) and building a Web site in just one hour in time for the holidays (in the free book). Enjoy this issue and have a fantastic Christmas.



Mark Newman, Editor
mnewman@paragon.co.uk

Practical internet
THE MAG WITH A MISSION

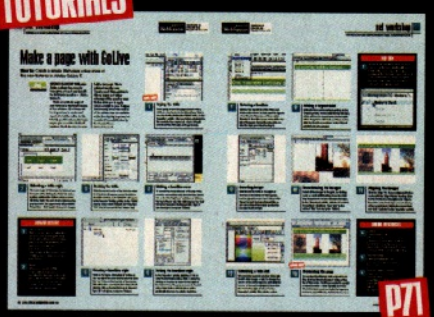
"We're here to explain as clearly as possible how you can use the Internet to save yourself time, money and hassle"

FEATURES

p32

Our in-depth features cover all the hottest topics – giving you advice on where to go on the Web and how to get the most from your Net connection

TUTORIALS



p71

Find out how to use the Web smarter and faster. Our Net Workshop section gives you simple-to-follow, step-by-step guides, all written in plain English

ADVICE

p28

Let our experts help you. Web Watchdog (p28) solves consumer problems, Q&A (p89) offers technical help and Design Doctor (p93) answers Web design issues

Avoid those new media interactive people.

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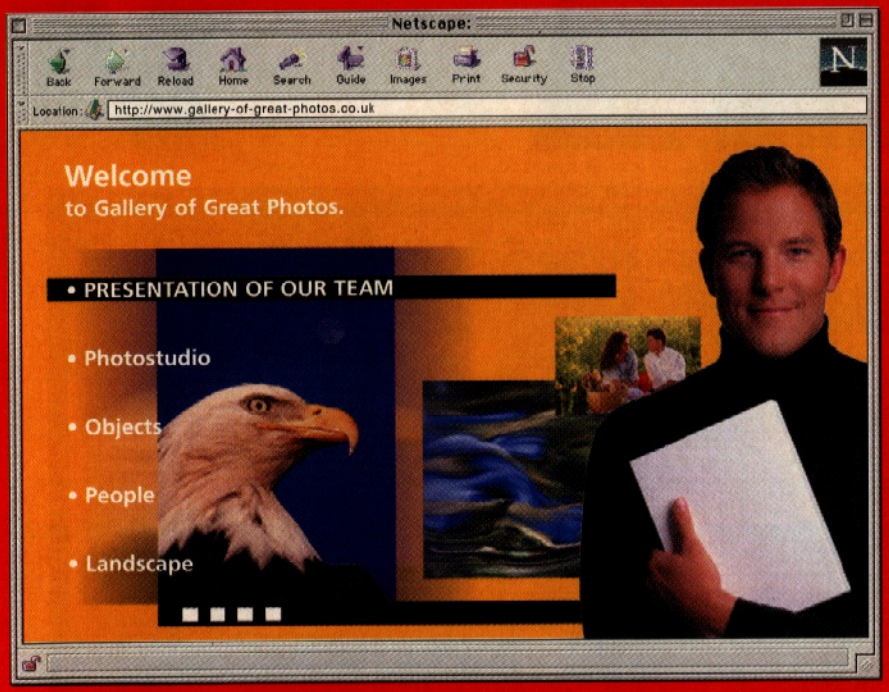

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Adobe Acrobat Reader ..... *Freeware, 5.6Mb*
ChargeMeter ..... *Freeware, 558Mb*
Email Coder ..... *Freeware, 56Kb*
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Gooey ..... *Freeware, 1.22Mb*
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ICQ ..... *Freeware, 6.14Mb*
Internet Explorer 5.5 ..... *Freeware, 38.6Mb*
IE5 Accessories ..... *Freeware, 136Kb*
Netscape Navigator 4.75 ..... *Freeware, 20Mb*
Netscape Navigator 6 Installer ..... *Freeware, 209Kb*
Opera 4.02 ..... *30-day trial, 1.81Mb*
Outlook Express 5 ..... *Freeware, part of IE5 package*
Shockwave/Flash ..... *Freeware, 3.11Mb*
Sonique 1.51 ..... *Freeware, 1.92Mb*
Stay Live 2000 ..... *Freeware, 96kb*
WinZip 8 ..... *Freeware, 1.2Mb*
XCleaner ..... *Freeware, 216Kb*

ISPs
Abel Internet ..... *Free Net access, 25.9Mb*
Madasafish ..... *Free Net access, 109.6Mb*

eBooks
115 Internet Marketing ..... *eBook, 303Kb*
Create Your Own eBook ..... *Shareware, 1Mb*
Start Home-Based Businesses ..... *eBook, 384Kb*
Internet Resource Book ..... *eBook, 283Kb*
Web Site Promotion ..... *eBook, 420Kb*

Software Reviews
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CYBERsitter ..... *Trial, 280Kb*
Iambigbrother ..... *Shareware, 1.4Mb*

Net Workshop
Christmas Emails ..... *Freeware, 755Kb*
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Site Building
160 Graphics Textures ..... *Freeware, 955Kb*
61 Free Fonts ..... *Freeware, 1.4Mb*
Active Shop ..... *30-day trial, 350Kb*
Button Artist ..... *Freeware, 658Kb*
CoffeeCup FTP ..... *Freeware, 736Kb*
CoffeeCup WebCam ..... *21-day trial, 3Mb*
Easy Applet Builder ..... *Shareware, 1.65Mb*
Font Creator ..... *30-day trial, 1.4Mb*
GateKeeper 3.2 ..... *Freeware, 205Kb*
GIF Construction Set ..... *Shareware, 3.89Mb*
GNet Submission ..... *Freeware, 3.2Mb*
HotDog Professional 6.2 ..... *30-day trial, 10.6Mb*
HTML Optimizer ..... *Freeware, 466Kb*
HTML Tidy ..... *Freeware, 96Kb*
Paint Shop Pro ..... *30-day trial, 32.8Mb*
Pop-Up ..... *Freeware, 661Kb*
SmartDraw5 ..... *Trial, 2.9Mb*
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WML Writer ..... *Trial, 926Kb*

For information on Mac programs featured on the disc, see page 117

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SOLVED!
32 It's not often that your PC or Net experience is completely smooth sailing – we give you 50 solutions to common problems

Whole lotta hoaxing going on
40 We give you a run down of the hoaxes and viruses that have plagued the Net, plus tell you how to protect yourself

Be an online Santa
48 Woo hoo! Christmas is nearly here at last, but that means getting a huge pile of shopping. We tell you how to buy presents for your family for under £100 – all from online shops

Inspiration!
56 Read our feature to find out how you can add sparkle and pizazz to your site, thanks to Web page gadgets and gizmos

Online soaps
64 If you go frothy at the thought of soap operas, read our feature for details on how soaps are making their voice heard online

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Outlook Express and Hotmail 74
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Send seasonally-enhanced email messages from Outlook with these stationary add-ons

ADVANCED TUTORIAL — **Web pros can discover how to master the Net in our advanced section**

Flash animated buttons, part two 80
If you were left on tenderhooks after last issue's Flash tutorial (and who wouldn't be?) here's the second part in all its glory. If you did miss out, though, turn to page 145 for information on back issues

HOME IMPROVEMENT — **How to make your Web site even better than the rest**

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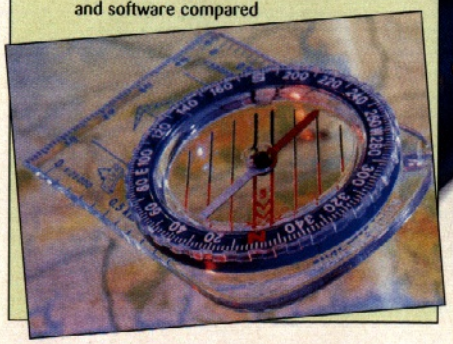
GoLive is Adobe's flagship Web page design package and it has now been given a brand new face-lift for its latest incarnation – GoLive 5. We show you how to create a basic home page using some of the new features

Building pages with tables 84
HTML is indeed a wondrous and versatile beast, as this tutorial shows. We show you how it's possible to design entire Web pages by using HTML tables as a flexible framework.

Full ISP listings

120 the guide

120 ISP Directory: Over 350 ISPs compared
128 Buyer's guide: The very best Net hardware and software compared



Regulars

Backchat 28
Find out what other readers think about the Net on our letters page, and see which companies have been up to no good with our Web Watchdog service

Web Fusion competition 55
Win yourself the chance to own a dedicated Web server free for life – worth over £10,000

Subscribe today and save! 86
Subscribe to make sure you never miss an issue – and save yourself some dosh into the bargain!

Error 404 146
ITN Online Editor, Fergus Shepard, continues to bring us his views on the Internet in his regular column. This month, he looks at porn filters and their place on the Internet

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Web page Q&A 93
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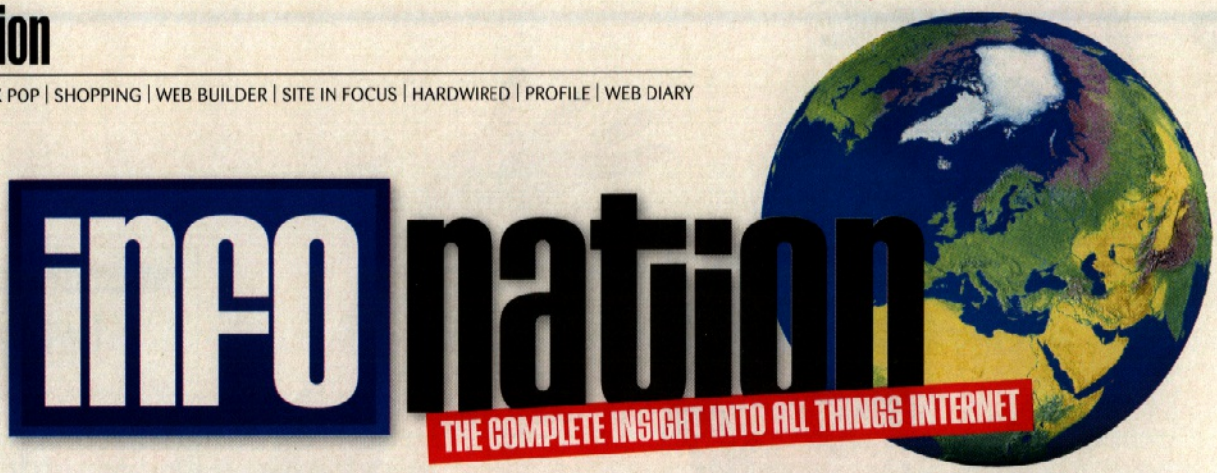


Buying online? Be wary

Trading Standards criticises online shopping for being slow and unreliable

THE INSTITUTE OF Trading Standards has advised online shoppers to be wary when parting with their money. This follows two separate surveys which found many eCommerce sites are failing to provide proper customer service.

More than a third of UK-based sites tested by the Institute had "cause for concern" in one survey. In another, it was found that 38 per cent of Internet orders did not arrive within the time specified and 17 per cent did not arrive at all.

The news will hardly boost confidence in online shopping with the busy Christmas shopping season now well underway.

The Institute has therefore produced a booklet, *Shopping on the Internet – Better Safe than Sorry!*, to help shoppers. The booklet, which can be viewed at **www.tradingstandards.gov.uk**, recommends punters obtain an actual address and telephone number for a company rather than just an email address. Customers should also watch out for high postage rates and other hidden costs, as well as checking the policy on returning goods.

Allan Charlesworth, Chief Executive of the group, said: "Internet shopping is a growing trend, and although it is extremely convenient, it has its pitfalls, which we must seek to avoid. [We] hope that shoppers will use our tips on the safe way to go shopping online – and that companies will take heed of warnings to improve customer service when conducting business on the Net."

E-apocalypse?

A greater worry for the fledgling eCommerce industry is evidence that the money markets are running out of patience with .coms who are still some years from profitability. The high-profile collapses of Boo and Clickmango could augur a wider shakeout as tech stocks the world over take a dive.

Amazon (**www.amazon.co.uk**) recently downplayed a report by city analysts Lehman Brothers that it would run out of funds unless it altered its spending patterns.

Freeserve (**www.freeserve.net**), once the darling of the stock exchange, recently saw its shares fall out of the FTSE-100 index. Auction site QXL (**www.qxl.co.uk**) is looking around for a strategic partner to provide further funds, while Letsbuyit.com (**www.letsbuyit.com**) admits it will be forced to put itself up for sale unless it secures an extra £70m of funding. Already, redundancies have been made.

Whatever the bleak predictions, most pundits agree online shopping will prevail. "This is not the death knell for eCommerce," said Alison Hopkins, Senior Policy Officer at the National Consumer Council. "Everyone knows there are problems on the security and fulfilment side which is fairly typical of any mail order service."

ONLINE SHOPPING ADVICE

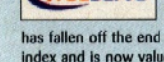
Trading Standards
www.tradingstandards.gov.uk

Office Of Fair Trading
www.oft.gov.uk/html/shopping/

Which? Web Trader
www.which.net/webtrader

THE .COM DOWNTURN – CAN THEY BOUNCE BACK?

Internet Service Providers



- Freeserve: Previously valued at £10bn, the company has fallen off the end of the FTSE-100 index and is now valued at a mere £1.6bn.
- CallNet 0800: CallNet claimed it could rival BT, but went under after nine months of trying to run an unmetered service.
- LineOne: Another financially-unsustainable unmetered service. Pulled the plug in July. Now 0845 service again.
- World Online: Last month capped the number of hours its customers could stay online using its unmetered service. Waiting patiently (and then some) for ADSL to take hold.
- Virgin: Has delayed its unmetered access Internet service until further notice.

Shopping Sites

- Boo.com: Burned through £120m of start-up money in just 18 months – spent largely on advertising and a champagne lifestyle for its staff, apparently – and went under. Now under new management.
- Boxman.com: Ceased trading last month and is heading for liquidation.
- Clickmango: The natural health site had to shut up shop in September – despite having Joanna Lumley on board – after failing to secure funding.
- Letsbuyit.com: Group-buying site shed a fifth of its staff to cut costs and admitted it's been burning five million euros a month.
- URWired: Games and DVD eShop ceased trading in August, after it had failed to find a suitable investor.

Online Banks

- E-Exchange: Went into liquidation last month after making approximately 100 staff redundant. E-Exchange is due to have its assets sold very shortly, barring a miracle.

- Egg: The high-profile Net bank lost £108 million in this year alone. The bank still claims to be on course for profitability, but has been hit by several security scares in recent months.
- A recent report by the Foundation for Information Policy Research suggested that Net banks failed to protect customers from online fraud – and pointed to Egg, Smile, the Royal Bank of Scotland and Halifax as the worst offenders.

High Techs

- IBM: 'Big Blue', the company that defined the PC, lost nearly $1bn last year. It's done so badly that some city analysts have even suggested it should quit the PC market altogether.

- Apple: "Disappointing sales" of the G4 Cube translated into a poor financial report for the company in its most recent results.
- AltaVista: The blue-chip search engine dipped its toe into the ISP market and came a cropper. Its UK MD resigned in the ensuing scandal. Had to postpone its IPO (Initial Public Offering) – flotation on the stock market – due to weak market conditions.

FREE BT PHONE CALLS

LOCAL TELEPHONE CALLS ARE LATEST INCENTIVE TO ATTRACT WEB USERS

BRITISH TELECOM IS giving free off-peak local phone calls in its latest attempt to attract users to sign up for three new unmetrered Internet packages.

The first package, BT Talk Together, costs £14.99 a month and includes line rental plus an unlimited number of local evening and weekend phone calls, as well as discounted national and international calls.

The second package, BT Surf Together, is a slightly cheaper version of SurfTime and offers off-peak Internet calls but does not include voice calls. It also costs £14.99 a month.

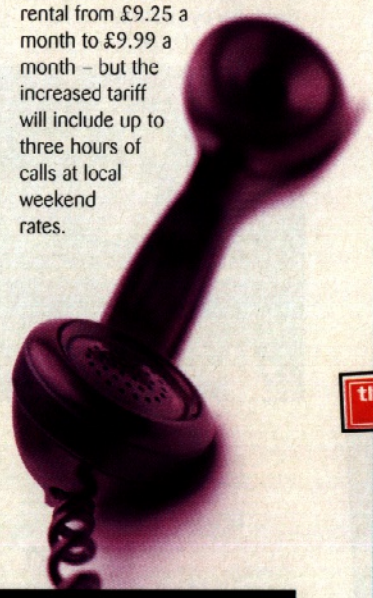
For those who want both unmetered off-peak Internet access and voice calls, BT has introduced BT Talk & Surf Together. Costing £17.99 a month, it includes all off-peak voice and Internet calls for a fixed monthly fee. All of these packages are available from 1 December.

Experts predict the popularity of the new services could make them very busy and Web connections slow.

BT's announcement came just days after Chancellor Gordon Brown said he wanted the UK Internet market to adopt US-style pricing "as quickly as possible."

Unmetered local voice calls have always been available in the US. Some experts believe that this is one of the key reasons why the US is so far ahead of the UK in terms of Internet access.

Meanwhile, BT is to hike the cost of its standard line rental from £9.25 a month to £9.99 a month – but the increased tariff will include up to three hours of calls at local weekend rates.



BOO! WE'RE BACK FROM THE DEAD

THE ILL-FATED Boo.com is back – despite being an unmitigated failure first time round. But the extravagant business practices and massive marketing spend that crippled the first Boo.com are history.

The site was bought in June for $400,000 by US clothing retailer Fashionmall.com, which has relaunched the service as a "style portal". For its money Fashionmall got the Web address, Miss Boo (above right) and the trademark.

Instead of a $40 million launch like the first time around, the relaunched site will instead be using "guerilla tactics" for its promotional activities. Its new president Kate Buggeln (left) said: "Wherever I go I am asked why we are reviving a tarnished brand. The answer is that people are interested. Everyone's heard of Boo.com and everyone wants to know about us."

The apt slogan for the new Boo is "because style never dies".

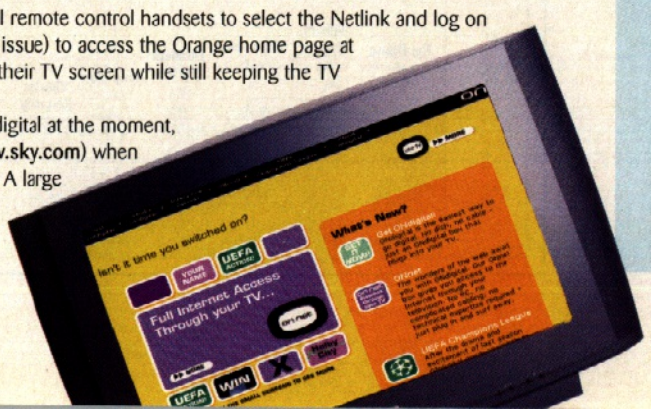
First Net TV advert aired

DIGITAL TV SERVICE SCREENS ADVERT THAT CAN LINK TO A WEB SITE

THE UK'S FIRST ever TV advertisement to carry an embedded Internet link – allowing viewers to click straight from a TV programme to a Web site – is being broadcast during November. The ad for mobile phone company Orange will be shown by digital terrestrial TV service ONdigital (**www.ondigital.co.uk**) during a live football game on 21 November.

Viewers will be able to use their ONdigital remote control handsets to select the Netlink and log on using ONnet (reviewed on page 101 of this issue) to access the Orange home page at **www.orange.co.uk**. The site will appear on their TV screen while still keeping the TV coverage in the corner.

'Netlinking' is only available through ONdigital at the moment, but is likely to be adopted by rival Sky (**www.sky.com**) when its Internet service launches early next year. A large number of advertisers are queueing up to take part.



news in brief

SHORT, SNAPPY AND TO-THE-POINT NET NEWS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

- Pay-per-view Internet has hit the UK for the first time with the launch of pre-paid cards aimed mainly at the under 18s. The cards, branded Futurcast, have gone on sale at £3 each at 4,000 convenience stores. They give access to a portal of 'premier content' at **www.futurcastuk.com**. Pop star Martine McCutcheon (pictured) appears on the cards and the Web content also features stories about her.

- **Want to earn some cash from your site? Thomas Cook hopes to sign up 10,000 sites to its affiliate scheme by the end of the year – and is making generous cash handouts to do so. It is paying Webmasters £5 for every flight booking and £7 for holiday booking made through the scheme. You can join at www.ukaffiliates.com.**

- A video showing the steamy antics of the housemates in TV and Web hit *Big Brother* is to feature scenes deemed too hot for the box. *Big Brother Uncut* will show Nichola and yoga fanatic Sada snogging, as well as Mel plucking her bikini line – plus, wait for it ladies, a full frontal shot of Craig in the shower... The show returns for a new series in 2001.

- **Ever fancied wiring your PC up to your car? No, neither have we. But Microsoft's Bill Gates (left) reckons there are enough car-crazed PC owners out there to warrant the launch of Windows CE for Automotives. The operating system is designed to power in-car computers.**

- Unmetered ISP LibertySurf (**www.libertysurf.co.uk**) has denied it is kicking off customers who are abusing its service. It has justified its decision to put some Net users on a different service in the hope that "these users will come back to a more normal user pattern." However, some LibertySurf users claim to have been "blacklisted" and given a service that is virtually impossible to use. They are claiming compensation and may even launch legal action.

Mad Madonna wins!

IN A HIGH-profile celebrity cybersquatting case, Madonna has taken control of the domain name Madonna.com.

Madonna.com had been registered by businessman Dan Parisi and had been in use as a pornographic site but it apparently lost money and was pulled last year. Madonna pursued it to the Geneva-based World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO).

Although Parisi argued the name is in the dictionary and has been in use for 2,000 years, the organisation ruled in favour of the celebrity. It said Parisi – who owns a string of high profile domains – could not prove "legitimate interest" in the domain name.

A final message on the site under Parisi's control said: "There are 275 worldwide trademarks using the word "madonna"... there are 87 active Web sites using "madonna" in their Web address, including madonna.net and madonna.org.

"We do not believe that because Ms Ciccone named her act after the Virgin Mary she has the right to stop any other party from using the word "madonna" as a title of their Web site."

Madonna's official site currently resides at **www.madonnamusic.com** but it is likely to move to the rescued domain.

news in brief

A BRIEF LOOK AT SOME OF THE OTHER NET STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

☐ *Practical Internet*'s sister magazine, *DVD Review*, is giving away a £4,000 Sony X-29 Vaio laptop/DVD player on its new Web site at **www.dvdreview.net** It has teamed up with online retailer A Digital World to also offer an MP3 player and great gaming and DVD software worth £500! Enter now – the competition runs from December 1 to January 5. DVDReview.net features a database of nearly 1,500 UK and US movie and hardware reviews, plus daily news updates and more.

☐ You might have thought that England vs Germany was the last game at Wembley before it got pulled down, but you'd be wrong. Thanks to a PR stunt from Umbro.Com, the lovable Cat Deeley and Edith Bowman, two of MTV's hottest talents, were the last combatants to kick a ball around the old stadium. They joined other celebs for the 'honest-it-really-is' final game.

☐ Two shopping sites which delivered goods free of charge to central Londoners have closed down. BagsOfTime.Com and UrbanFetch.Com blamed the downturn in sentiment from venture capitalists towards retail start-ups. Both sites were reportedly in merger talks with rival KooBuyCity.com in last-ditch bids to survive.

☐ The Web and the humble TV are converging at last. Not only has ONdigital released ONnet (reviewed on page 100), but Bush has unveiled a sub-£200 Net TV (right) which includes a remote control that doubles up as a keyboard. Freebox (www.iwantabox.com) has also lifted the curtain on its TV set-top box which is being given away to schools.

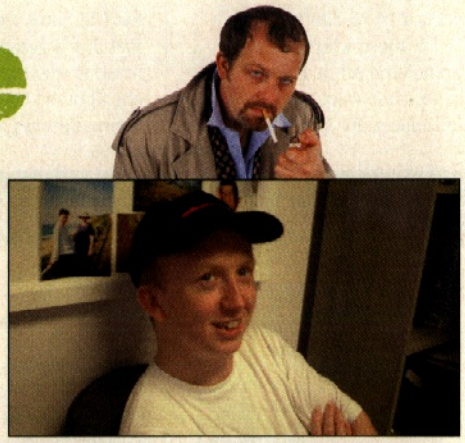
☐ Have you cast your vote in the *Practical Internet* awards yet? We've been inundated with replies at our Web site at **www.practicalinternet.co.uk** so have extended the time you have to vote. You can now tell us your favourite sites up until December 5.

THE Sludge REPORT

SALACIOUS SATIRE FROM THE SUPERHIGHWAY

● The race to be crowned the world's most downloaded woman has led to a catscrap in the US. Danni Ashe, owner of adult site Danni's Hard Drive, was recently named Most Downloadable Woman in The Guinness Book of World Records after dethroning supermodel Cindy Margolis. But Margolis was apparently so unhappy with this that she presented Guinness with a "telephone directory-sized piece of evidence" supporting her claim on the title. The company has given in and decided to split the title in two!

● News reaches Sludge from Sweden that Net users are playing 'Hunt the Elk' thanks to a Web cam. Logging on at **www.svd.se/alg** is not as dodgy as it sounds: Swedish newspaper Svenska Dagbladet has set up a digicam delivering minute-by-minute snapshots in the hope of catching a glimpse of the mighty creatures.

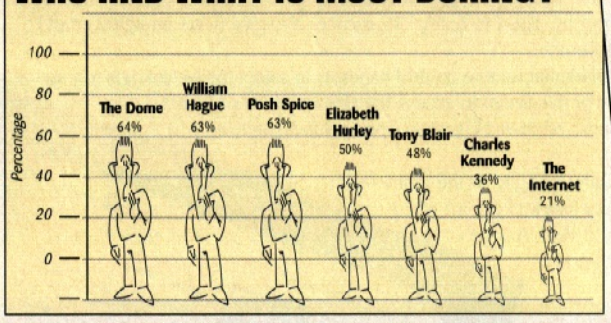


● Sludge was disturbed to find *Practical Internet*'s very own Thomas Watson (above) may be looking for a new career. He's been spotted at **http://members.tripod.co.uk/ThomasWatson_2/index.html** trying to win the Face of 2000 model competition. Esteé Lauder have apparently already put in an offer to get Thomas to promote the new scent, Seedy.

stat attack

YES, IT'S THOSE FIGURES THAT CONFIRM WHAT WE ALREADY KNEW... THERE'S TOO MUCH HYPE SURROUNDING THE NET. NOT AS MUCH AS SURROUNDING THE DOME THOUGH, WHICH WAS VOTED THE MOST BORING SUBJECT EVER

WHO AND WHAT IS MOST BORING?



Source: MSN.co.uk

IT'S A FACT!

- Apparently six out of ten people believe that the phrase ".com" is over-used – and nearly two thirds of people are sick of hearing the success stories of twenty-something .com millionaires. So we'll try and tone it down from now on...

Free Internet Service Provider of the year

Heard the news yet? We're number one, numero uno, the cat's whiskers, the bee's knees, officially the best free ISP in the country. And we have the medal to prove it. So if you're not a FreeUK member then why not?

For the best in free Internet access open your account online at www.freeuk.com

FREE UK

www.freeuk.com or call **0845 355 5555**

Net WATCH

Chris Ellison looks at how your emails may be legally read

THE GOVERNMENT'S CONTROVERSIAL Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) finally came into force in October. The Act requires ISPs to secretly monitor emails and Web logs at the request of the security forces. It also allows employers to monitor email and Internet usage. It followed just weeks after the UK Human Rights Act (HRA) came into effect, enshrining the European Convention on Human Rights in UK law. The HRA codifies a person's right to privacy and private correspondence, bringing the two pieces of legislation into direct conflict.

In any democratic society employees are as entitled to privacy in their workplace just as much as anywhere else. Your boss has no right to force open your filing cabinet against your wishes while you are off sick, and similarly they have no right to read your personal electronic correspondence. But under RIPA, the Government and your boss can now legally read all your emails and track Web sites you visit. How will these two pieces of legislation be reconciled? Like the other forms of Internet regulation that precede it – through the law of contract. If you look at the small print for your ISP you will probably find you have signed up to all manner of constraints on your behaviour – like not sending emails that might upset anyone, for instance.

And so it will be with employment. Employees will find new terms in their contracts. Unless you want to be out of a job you are likely to consent to give up your right to privacy and allow your boss to carry out Internet surveillance. You would have to be a pretty staunch supporter not to think it wasn't all part of a plan to give you something with one hand and to take it away with the other.

*Internet Freedom can be contacted at **campaign@netfreedom.org**. The campaign's Web site is at **www.netfreedom.org***

Simply scent-sational

WEB USERS OFTEN take a deep breath before going online – usually because of the slow speeds at which Web pages load – but they'll shortly be doing it to take a sniff of the sites they visit!

DigiScents (**www.digiscents.com**) has unveiled iSmell, an ingenious gadget that emits scents related to the images displayed on your PC screen.

The device plugs into the USB port of a computer and incorporates a fan which emits 128 odours that can be mixed and matched to conjure up any smell. Users simply click on Web images which have embedded links to trigger the cartridge inside to create the right scent.

DigiScents is initially aiming the device at sites selling flowers and greetings cards, but sees it rapidly being used elsewhere too. "I would think that a lot of people would be interested in smelling the latest Britney Spears video," smirked the firm's PR director, David Libby.

Even though the device is still in development, DigiScents hopes to get it on shop shelves next year. "This takes virtual reality to the next level and makes life a lot more immersive," said Libby.

CELEBRITY BOOKMARKS

Gabby Yorath

ITV SPORTS PERSONALITY OF THE YEAR TELLS US HOW SHE USES THE INTERNET

GABBY'S FAB FIVE

www.itv-football.co.uk
www.lastminute.com
www.exclusivescotland.com
www.sainsburystoyou.com
www.allders.com

1. How long have you been surfing the Net?
For about the last year or so.

2. Do you have a Web site of your own?
No, but **www.itv-football.co.uk** contains lots of information on what I am doing.

3. If you could create a Web site about anything at all, what would it be?
It would be called **celebrityshags.com**, a comedy site where I would romantically link together the most unlikely celebrity couples and create gossip surrounding them.

4. Have you bought anything online?
Yes, I bought some saucepans and a Kenwood food processor from **www.allders.com**.

5. Have you ever chatted online?
I talk to my friend Mel occasionally.

6. Would you ever date someone you'd met online?
Probably not, and due to the fact I am getting married fairly soon it wouldn't really be a good idea!

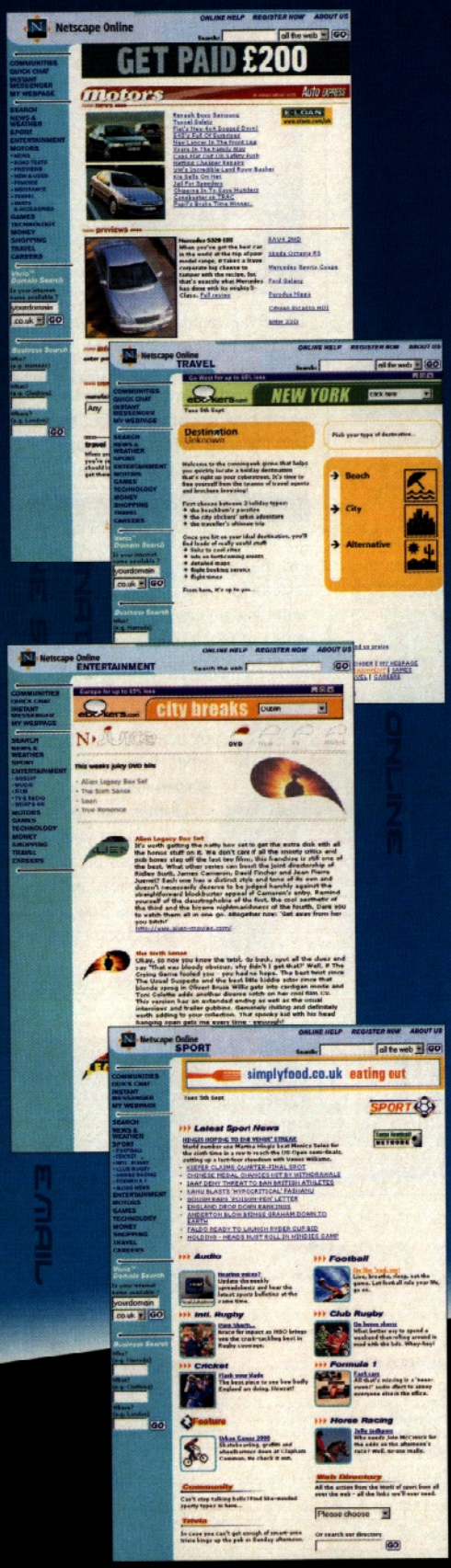
7. Do you think the Net should be censored?
I think it is important for children not to be exposed to harmful areas of the Web, but how you censor it for children is a difficult one. Kids are usually more capable of using the Internet than most adults.

8. Do sites about you and online celebrity stalking worry you?
Yes, stalking bothers me. My sister found a fantasy Web site about me which worried me somewhat – the content was rather strange!

Gabby and hubbie-to-be Kenny Logan (of rugby fame) love to surf together

New... The No.1 Property Search Engine.
Search through **498,674** properties from every major property site with the... SMART ENGINE!
www.**CompleteHouseBuyer**.co.uk
COMPLETE HOUSE BUYER.co.uk
Powered by **SMART ENGINE TECHNOLOGY**

Experience NETSCAPE ONLINE



Browse the Web with the people who made it accessible in the first place.

If it's Internet access with cutting-edge content you're after, and you're not interested in paying a monthly subscription fee, then Netscape Online is the service for you. Netscape Online brings you the complete Internet package giving you:

- Full access to the Internet with Netscape Navigator
- Unlimited email addresses with Netscape Messenger
- 20Mb Web space with Netscape Composer
- Live chat with Instant Messenger

In addition, Netscape Online gives you access to a whole host of information, so you get the news you want when you want it, all the action from the world of sport, the latest entertainment news, music & film reviews, and lots more. So why not try it out for yourself – load up your CD now!

www.netscapeonline.co.uk

100% Net. 100% FREE.*

* Excludes telephone calls charged at local BT rates. Technical Support charged at premium rate (50p per minute).

net shopping

IN THE LONG HARD SEARCH TO FIND GIFTS BEYOND THE SOCK BOUNDARY, WE LOOK AT ALTERNATIVE GIFT SHOPPING SITES

In alternative company

What better way to start this quest for alternative gifts than with the aptly named Alternative Gift Company? A visit to **www.alt-gifts.com** will furnish you with a

whole array of gifts to pique your interest. With sections for Men, Women, Kids or Home, it's easy to find what you want. Being saucy sex pots, we particularly liked the furry love cuffs, at a bargain price of £4.98. Also of note is the Alien Mask. For a mere £14.99, you get to walk around looking like an alien, speaking through a voice box that distorts your speech into alien lingo. But the best thing about the site is that you can send your gifts in a Mmadlok box.

Each of these has a countdown timer, so the recipient can't have a sneaky peak at what they've got until the day you've set it to open. Such torture, such fun!

Over the moon

Ten pounds doesn't really buy you that much these days, but it could buy you a piece of the moon. Yes indeed, get yourself to **www.moonestates.com** and you could buy yourself an acre of the moon for ten English pounds (plus £5 registration fee). Although a nation cannot claim ownership of the moon or any other celestial bodies, individuals can. Hence the reason why you can own an acre of the moon. But if the

beautiful planet is not to your liking, you will soon also be able to buy a piece of Mars, Venus or Io. As well as your acre, you also get a Deed, Property Map, Mineral Rights and an Original Declaration of Ownership. Unfortunately, you can't charge NASA for landing on your property, so no scope for Del Boy-type schemes there. Dagnammit.

Fancy a trip to the bazaar?

There's something so welcoming about a site with a little animated figure that guides you through the content. Go Bazaar (**www.gobazaar.co.uk**) has Baz the Cat. This feline oracle lords over the

site, pointing you in the direction of some strange and enticing gifts. We liked Intellibot – The Intelligent Robot. Looking like a tubby Metal Mickey, he's yours for

£12.99. Five pounds will buy you a cat soap that grows hair. Just expose the soap to air and within days it will have a lustrous mane of hair. It's worth buying just for the fact that at last, the soap will have hairs on it that are supposed to be there!

Culture vulture

Sometimes alternative shopping just means buying something tasteful for once. If you're fed up with blow up chairs, fibre optic lamps or those bloody singing fish, go to **www.britishmuseum.co.uk** and gaze in wonder at the goods. Not only can you buy beautiful jewellery, games, house and garden items or clothes, but you can get your hands on replicas and busts (snigger). The objects that caught our appreciative eye was

HEAD TO HEAD CRYSTAL CAVERN Vs WRYD SHOP

TWO ALTERNATIVE RETAILERS BATTLE FOR THE PRIESTESS CROWN

Crystal Cavern (www.crystalcavern.com)	Features	Wyrd Shop (www.wyrdshop.com)
You don't have to register for anything	**Registration?**	Only when you want to buy
Yes, although shows price in dollars and pounds, which is confusing	**Easy ordering system?**	No need for a spirit guide to help you
Crystals and wands and those power bead things	**What do they sell?**	Absolutely anything you could need for a night in the woods on a Sabbat
Just tap in those magic numbers to receive the goods	**Credit cards?**	They will do nicely
Depends on how much you buy	**Delivery costs?**	Emailed to you once your order has been placed
It's a very life-enhancing site	**Can you collect good karma online?**	The site oozes good karma
Definitely Sabrina. On a weak day	**Blair Witch or Sabrina the Teenage Witch?**	Blair Witch
Pings greet you as the page loads	**Any dodgy music?**	Thankfully, pan pipes are left at the door
New Age all the way	**Occult or New Age?**	Occult in a non-scary way
Paul Daniels	**Is it more Paul Daniels than Aleister Crowley?**	The Great Beast would find much of use here
Something to make the world pink and full of love	**If it was a spell, what would it be?**	A power spell that just gets the job done with no arsing about.
Maybe just toasted a bit	**Should it be burnt at the stake?**	No way hosay. It's a funny site that deserves to rise

the Shabti of Iwi (£100), the Head of Buddha (£200) and some tasteful bookends (£65 for the pair). Very tasteful, we think you'll agree.

Out on the pierce

Body piercing isn't really all that radical or alternative anymore – gone are the days when you had to scour the country for a body piercer, now you can have a needle shoved through you while you're getting a perm done. That aside, it's still quite difficult to get decent body jewellery, and more importantly, not get ripped off. Enter Cold Steel (**www.cold steel.co.uk**) an excellent company that has been merrily piercing people for years. Now you can buy all manner of piercing paraphernalia for your holes and get advice and information at the same time. We liked the Circular Barbell,

prices start from £7.50 and the UV Facial Spikes, starting from £7. But it's not all jewellery. There's books, clothes, and brand merchandise, such as the minx that is Vince Ray.

Wacky days are here again

Every so often there comes a site that makes you smile deep inside and bless the day that you got a credit card. Wacky Jac is one of those sites. Anyone with any kind of magical sensibilities should go here now, because the clothing, accessories and supplies are superb. The first item that caught our eye was the Snatchpak (tee hee). For just $12, the ladies can carry round their change in something much more fun than a bum bag. This watch is a bargain at $23, while you can get a Witch T-shirt for only $16. Go on, shun the techie image of Internet users and put a bit of magic in your life. We dare you.

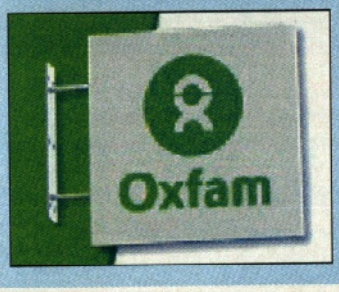
news in brief

THE LATEST CONSUMER NEWS FROM THE WORLD OF ONLINE SHOPPING...

Charity begins online

Oxfam has launched the UK's first online charity shop in partnership with Yahoo! With hundreds of different and unique products, the site at **www.oxfam.org.uk/shop** sells a range of goods, from second-hand collectibles that the shop has become famous for, to products from its Fair Trade range.

Julia Flynn, the Internet Manager at Oxfam said: "Whether it's Christmas cards, coffee or second-hand books, we are confident that Oxfam's online shop will be a firm favourite on the virtual high street."



WEB WITCH

IF THERE'S SOMETHING YOU WANT TO BUY ONLINE BUT DON'T KNOW WHERE TO START, GET THE WEB WITCH TO CONSULT HER SCRYING GLASS AND FIND IT FOR YOU

Greetings to you Web Witch. I have a question which I really hope you can help me with. I have a fancy dress party to go to, and I want a costume. There are no fancy dress shops near where I live, and to be honest, I haven't really got the time to go further afield to find a costume. I might try to make one, but my ability with a needle and thread leaves a lot to be desired. I have had a quick look on the Internet to see if I could find a site that hired out costumes, but the only ones I could find where home pages for shops. While these were lovely, they didn't offer any mail order or online ordering facilities. Do you think you could have a look for me?

Charles Hanks

Of course I can have a look for you and what's more, I have found one that just might do the job. Although most of the fancy dress sites don't offer online ordering facilities, there are a couple that do. It seems as though you want the least amount of hassle, in which case Celebrations (**www.celebrations-party.co.uk**) is probably your best bet The range isn't extensive, but there's a great Hercules costume, and the Darth Maul costume is also excellent. There are pictures of the costumes and all of the orders are over a secure server. If you're unsure about any of the costumes, you can also email for further information.

For help in finding anything you want to buy, email the Web Witch at pixie@paragon.co.uk

FOR SMART WOMEN WITH BUSY LIVES
Shop @home
Issue seven on sale 12 October

Just Click And Buy!

SHOP@HOME is the world's first monthly Internet shopping magazine for women. Every month we bring you fresh ideas for all the family, from household makeovers to where to buy designer perfumes for half price.

And there's more. SHOP@HOME tells you where to find the latest news, gossip, advice and current affairs on the Internet. If you want a new job, a new house or even a new man, SHOP@HOME tells you where to look!

web builder

ALL THAT'S NEW IN THE WORLD OF WEB SITE CONSTRUCTION IS REPORTED HERE, ALONG WITH YOUR NEW SITES AND OUR GURU'S VIEWS

HTML Hack

James Seabright thinks the impact of P3P extends beyond online privacy

IT'S NOT OFTEN that a development as important as the Platform for Privacy Preferences (P3P) comes along, I'd certainly rank its potential impact alongside that of Web 'killer apps' such as JavaScript and Cascading Style Sheets. Whilst the basic aims of the project have already been realised in the form of Microsoft Wallet and other Internet Explorer add-ons, P3P will have a much more powerful impact as all browsers and Web servers will eventually support it. After all, it's only through this sort of universal support

*Amazon's (**www.amazon.co.uk**) one-click ordering system is a taste of what P3P offers*

that such a technology becomes time-saving rather than hassle-inducing.

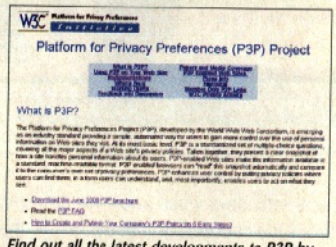
More important still is the fact that P3P will represent a major increase in the IQ of the average Web browser – at last online shopping will be free from the hassle of form filling, and subscribing to a site newsletter will be as simple as clicking one button. Every site could offer Amazon-style One Click ordering, without reference to whether the visitor has already set up an account with them. Suddenly the Web browser becomes the user's best friend, as it will actively assist in the online experience rather than being an annoyingly passive window on the world.

The issues highlighted by critics of P3P, such as confused users, the dangers of browser default privacy settings and the potential for illicit acquisition of personal data, will no doubt cause teething problems in the early days, but this is to be expected with any new Net technology on this scale. Once P3P has settled in, we won't know how we ever lived without it.

Privacy made perfect

THE WORLD WIDE Web Consortium's Platform for Privacy Preferences (P3P) initiative is set to revolutionise the way personal information is handled online. When implemented, the benefits for Web site builders and visitors will be immense – sites will be able to collect more accurate information about their visitors quicker than ever before, and Web surfers will be able to specify exactly what personal information is released to or used by a site.

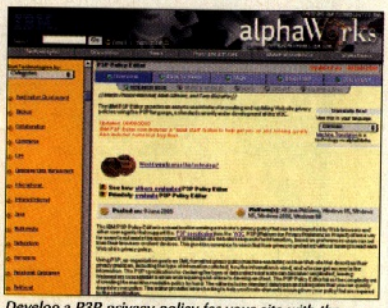
This includes everything from the basics of name, address and phone number to other more covert methods of tracking such as IP address and other details that can be collected without the user's knowledge on visiting a Web site. Filling in Web forms will become almost obsolete, as Web users will simply enter their personal details into their browser preference panel and then specify what kind of information can be released to a Web site with or without the user's permission.



*Find out all the latest developments to P3P by visiting **www.w3.org/P3P***

Your privacy boundaries

On encountering a Web site requesting personal information, a P3P-enabled Web browser will interrogate the site's privacy policies to see if they are compatible with user preferences. In the event of policies not being compatible, it is possible for the site and browser to haggle over what information will be exchanged, with the user being alerted if any deviation from their privacy preference is requested by the site.



*Develop a P3P privacy policy for your site with the software from **www.alphaworks.ibm.com/tech/p3peditor***

After two years of proposals and drafts, the first full specification, P3P 1.0, was issued on 15 September, and as *Practical Internet* went to press, leading developers were meeting in Palo Alto, California to test the latest technology in the field. Although P3P has received much criticism since its inception, support for it has now grown to include all the major browser makers and other key players such as IBM.

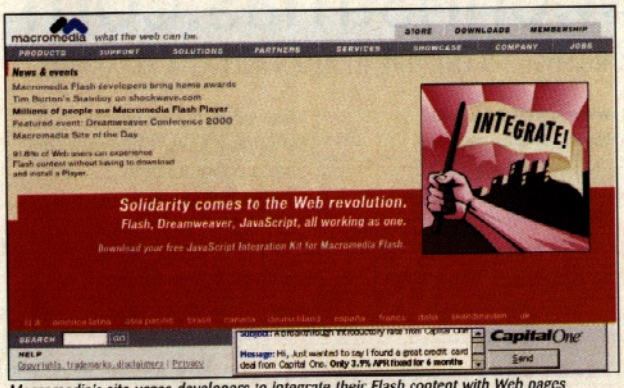
A number of problem areas remain, particularly the concern that many of the privacy issues being dealt with will confuse and panic users who are unfamiliar with the intricacies of Web technology. Whilst the simple solution to this is for browser makers to provide various pre-packaged privacy options to choose between, this will remain an uninformed choice for many users.

BECOME AN ISP IN AN INSTANT

WEB SITE OWNERS can now offer their site visitors a free dial-up service for lightning fast modem access to the Internet, thanks to domain registrars uk2.net. There's no convoluted sign up process for either you or your site visitor – simply register with or transfer an existing domain to uk2.net and follow the instructions at **http://uk2.net/news/news31.txt**. Whilst it would be possible to offer the service even without owning your own domain name, this would reduce the personalisation potential . For instance, you can offer email addresses that end in your domain name, and with a little extra configuration, provide full mail server access for receiving and sending mail using your domain name.

Free Flash Scripting Tools

LINKING MACROMEDIA FLASH movies to other Web page elements has just become easier, thanks to the release of the free JavaScript Integration Kit. The 400k download, available from **www.macromedia.com/exchange**, provides a range of adaptable JavaScripts that can be configured using Macromedia's Dreamweaver page authoring software. The extensions will enable a wide range of Flash applications that would previously have required an advanced knowledge of scripting. These include video-style controls to play, zoom or pan Flash movies, cookie management and form validation functions, plus detecting whether the user has Flash Player installed. Many other free extensions to Macromedia's range of graphics and Web software can also be found at the Macromedia Exchange site.



Macromedia's site urges developers to integrate their Flash content with Web pages by using their new scripting tools

SEARCH FOR SUCCESS

THERE'S A LOT more to getting successful results from search engines than just submitting your site. Web promotions people, Ready2Submit, is offering a free analysis service, which scours your pages and assesses what changes you need to make to be sure of getting a higher ranking from the most popular search engines. Unfortunately you'll have to pay – fees begin at $29 for a one time submission and $59 for a three month subscription. See **www.ready2submit.com**.

Ready2Submit will tell you if your site is ready for search engine submission

Stay in constant contact

If you're looking for an advert-free, opt-in mailing list provider, Roving have got some great packages on offer

ONE OF THE most effective ways of keeping visitors loyal to your site is to set up an opt-in mailing list but running the mailing list yourself can be a complicated affair. Whilst free services such as ListBot (**www.listbot.com**) are one option for help in this field, you'll find more custom features and less third party advertising if you use a service like Roving's Constant Contact Opt In Builder (**http://cc1.roving.com**). It'll even help you put together an email to grab your visitor's attention. All this comes free for the first 6 days, after that you pay $10 for up to 250 subscribers.

DOMAIN NAME NEWS

New year, new top-level domains

After years of beating around the virtual bush, the Net is set to have a new family of top-level domain (TLD) extensions early in 2001. By the time you read this, decision-making body ICANN (www.icann.org) should have decided which of the hundreds of proposed TLDs will join the over-subscribed com, net and org extensions. In theory, anyone was able to suggest a TLD for ICANN to consider; in practice only 45 could afford the US$50k (£35k) entry fee.

Register a domain from your mobile

Domain registration enthusiasts will be delighted to learn that directnic.com are now registering domains via WAP (Wireless Application Protocol). If you think of a dream domain name and simply can't wait to get back home to register it, you just have to log on to directnic.com/wap using any Net-enabled mobile.

READER'S SITES OF THE MONTH

GET A MENTION BY SENDING YOUR URL TO JAMES@PARAGON.CO.UK

Nutz

Site creator: Alistair Hazell

URL: www.nutz.co.uk

Comment: This is one of the best all-round reader's site that *Practical Internet* has seen. The appealing, effective design is well complemented by a wide range of content, both created by the site owner and imported from affiliate programs. All this is supported by a brilliant use of PHP to make the frames and dynamic elements work without a hitch.

New Kids On The Block

Site creator: Tracey

URL: www.nkotb.co.uk

Comment: Fans of the boy band will love this site, which has left no stone unturned in NKOTB's history, discography and members. It's slightly confusing that some links in the main menu send the visitor straight to external Web sites without warning, but those pages hosted on the site are well designed and informative.

Spoilheap

Site creator: Sue Anderson

URL: www.spoilheap.co.uk

Comment: Whilst archaeology may not be everyone's idea of fun, this site has adopted a bright and breezy design that suits the extensive content well. The pages are perhaps a little too long, with too many lacking in graphics or sub-headings to break up the text. Overall, it achieves its aim of informing the visitor very well.

site in focus

Christmas.com: www.christmas.com

THE CHRISTMAS FEVER IS STARTING TO HEAT UP AND WE ADD MORE FUEL TO THE FIRE BY LOOKING AT A XMAS SITE

As it's nearly Christmas, that time of shiny stuff, what could be more Christmassy than a site about Christmas? Well, not much. And what more Christmassy URL could there be at Christmas than **www.christmas.com**? None, of course.

Christmas.com is an excellent site which aims to capture everything festive into one big Web bundle and send it first-class to Santa himself.

As well as the inevitable shopping links, Christmas.com has a countdown to 25 December from all over the world, giving months, days, hours, minutes and seconds from Samoa to Mexico City.

new sites

THIS MONTH'S HOTTEST NEW SITES AND WHERE TO FIND THEM

RUMOUR AND COUNTER-RUMOUR

www.therumour.com

If you can't live without knowing who the All Saints' latest squeeze is, where Liam goes to sink a few or where Kate Moss likes to eat her rabbit food, then you should check out The Rumour.

Featuring news either Net-based or direct to your mobile phone, The Rumour is a Web site full of scurrilous gossip about celebrities (as if we didn't have enough already). It's aimed at female readers and apparently employing a "feisty team with across-the-board experience". Ooh, as they say, er.

SEARCH ME

www.uk250.co.uk

Tired of getting ridiculous responses from search engines when you're just looking for simple stuff? UK250 has come up with a novel concept to cut down that most annoying of tasks, searching.

All you need to do is enter the type of Web site you're looking for directly into the address box of your browser – plus the suffix websites.co.uk – to take you straight to a list of relevant Web sites. For instance, if you're looking for gifts just type in **www.giftswebsites.co.uk** into the address box of your browser and UK250 will take you straight there. The main index site at **www.uk250.co.uk** has lifestyle subjects containing a selection of UK-only content that has been reviewed by UK250 staff.

CHANGE YOUR WORLD VIEW

This section has postings from around the world about how Christmas is celebrated overseas. There are more than 200 countries featured, from Albania to Zimbabwe and if you want to share your Yuletide experiences you can.

WISHING THE DAYS AWAY

Here you can make a list of all the things you'd like your friends and family to buy you at Christmas. Make a list. Then wish. Then be overcome with joy when you wake up on Christmas morning.

SPREAD THE WORD

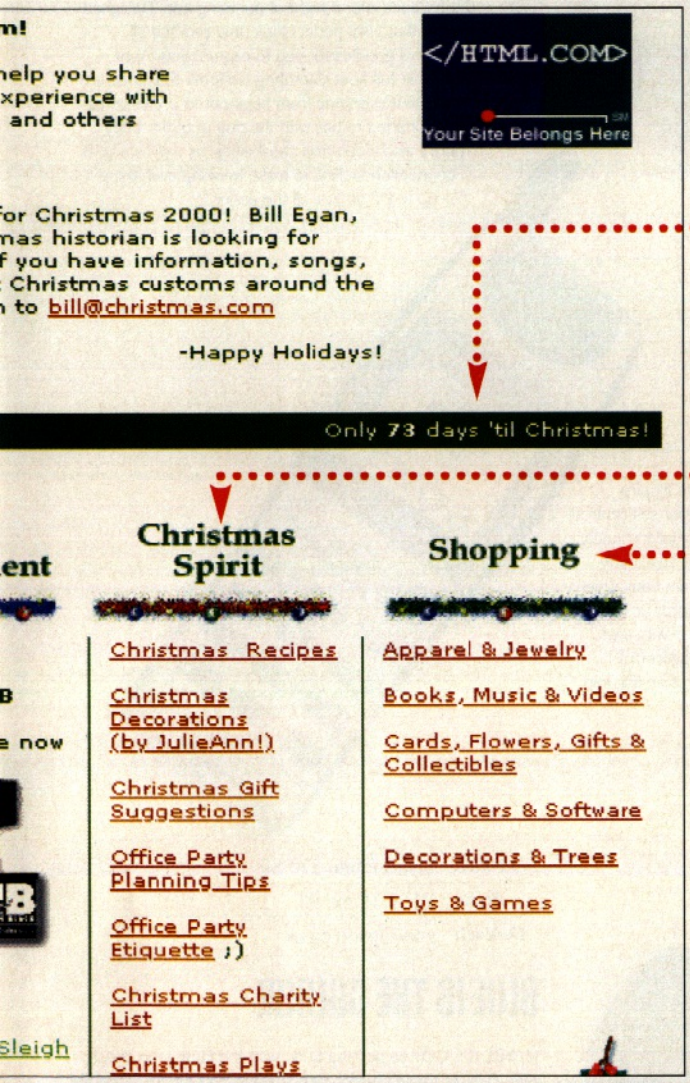
You can send a free e-greetings card if you're too stingy or busy to write and send your own. The site uses 3D Greetings but takes you straight to the Christmas Online section of the site, where you can choose from a selection of festive missives. Also, if you want to tell your friends and family about Christmas.com, just fill in the online form.

FUN, FUN, FUN

Holiday entertainment with the Elves In Black and a bizarre Cybersleigh Simulator. There's also an X-Mas Files which finds "convincing" evidence of a real Santa appearing throughout history. Very funny, and with some great Java games to mess around with, it's possible to spend hours here. We did.

This is a great place to go if you've no idea of where to start preparing for the festive season – there are cards, charity lists, suggestions, recipes, tips – plus all those other annoying little things that people forget, like wrapping, decorations and presents. The concept of Elves In Black authorised by the Jolly Big One to protect the spirit of Christmas gave us nightmares for a while, but apart from that, the whole thing is a lot of fun.

Perhaps the best section is the one entitled Office Party Etiquette, instructing you on how to behave at the ubiquitous work shindig. No more snogging the Editor's girlfriend or throwing up all over him. Not that we'd ever do anything like that, of course.



THOSE ENDLESS DAYS

Look! You've got this many days to go until Christmas! Actually, you'll have substantially less by the time you read this, but you get the idea...

SPIRITUS MUNDI

Find the true spirit of Christmas here, with holiday music, crafts, tips and recipes (including one for West African Couscous). Julie-Ann will help you with the decorations and there's even a section on office party etiquette. Which, as anyone in this office will tell you, is a must if you're going to be able to look your colleagues in the eye on Monday morning.

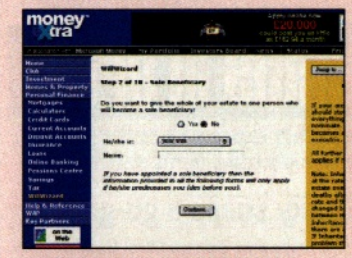
SHOP 'TIL YOU DROP

What Christmas site would be complete without a shopping section? Not this one, clearly. Basically a links page to sites that sell lots of festive goodies, there's cards, flowers, games, books, music and videos to choose from. Apparently only 24 per cent of men and 21 per cent of women have their presents bought by Christmas Eve. So there you go.

new sites

THIS MONTH'S HOTTEST NEW SITES AND WHERE TO FIND THEM

DYING TONIGHT?



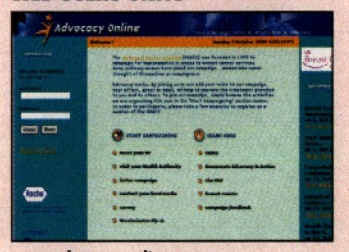
www.moneyextra.com/willwizard

Less than one in three people in England and Wales have made a will – most people don't like to think too much about death, and making a will often seems complicated and costly.

Will Wizard might sound like a character from the Harry Potter books but it's actually a clever little Web site, that helps people to write their Will free of charge. This very simple service that allows you to name your beneficiaries and executors and covers your personal details, assets and who you want to benefit. It's a quick and easy way to sort out what happens after you've snuffed it and who gets what. The ten steps even include a section where you can decide what music you want at the funeral.

Of course, if you want to leave any items of worth to the hard-working *Practical Internet* team, feel free. Remember, we're all going to go sometime.

WEB USERS UNITE



www.advocacyonline.net

Grassroots political movement is not dead, as the recent fuel protests and anti-corporate demonstrations have illustrated. These movements have – by and large – been orchestrated on the Internet, and the new Advocacy Online site is devoted to them.

Advocacy Online is a Web site aimed at the general public, and brings political lobbying on to the Internet. Groups that license Advocacy's technology will be able to monitor their campaign progress through volunteer feedback and data consolidation, while the co-ordination of volunteer activity eliminates the need to directly manage their efforts. The UK Breast Cancer Coalition has already signed up for the service, and more groups are expected in the New Year.

hard wired

A SELECTION OF SASSY STUFF YOU'D LIKE TO SEE AS SANTA EMPTIES THE CONTENTS OF HIS MAGIC SACK DOWN YOUR CHUTE

news in brief

MORE NET GADGETS TO CREATE A FUSS DOWN AT DIXONS IN THE NEAR FUTURE

Dinky snaps a go-go

With more style than Jean Paul-Gaultier walking stylishly alongside hardman actor Clint Eastwood, the DC3800 from Kodak is also one of the weeniest digital cameras you can get your hands on at the moment. Billed as being 'ultra-compact', you can bet your bottom dollar that this little stunner packs more punch than a bowl of strong punch. Sure enough, it's got handy digital zoom and autofocus stuff to make your pictures stand out in a crowd. What's more, with its 'what's that in ounces' 165g weight, you won't be dealing with any unsightly bulges in your trousers either.

Looking for a fast card

WHEN YOU TIRE of the endless hassle of transferring stuff to and from your PC or Mac from your latest gizmo, give this a shot. Working as some kind of crazy mobile hard disk thing, the PhotoMate from Dane-Elec can store all manner of goodies, helping to save those valuable MP3 player batteries for much more important things, like listening to your choons. Not only that, but the PhotoMate uses Flash cards as memory, so you're looking at transfer rates quicker than Chris Sutton's in and out of Chelsea.

Product:	DCR-PC110
Price:	approx £1500
Contact:	www.sony.co.uk

THE ZEISS CAM COMETH

FEATURING A STEADY-eddy Carl Zeiss lens, this CCD DV camcorder from Sony is as powerful as Geoff Capes after a night of pumping iron. Designed to offer that pixel perfect look, this cam has all manner of goodies for you to capture your Aunt Mildred in full flow. Capturing a mighty 520 lines, we reckon that everyone from beginner to professional will be chuffed to bits with the output of this baby. There's also video-mail capabilities, as well as a USB connection facility, to make hooking everything up to PC or Mac all the easier.

Product:	CMD-J5
Price:	approx £30
Contact:	www.sony.co.uk

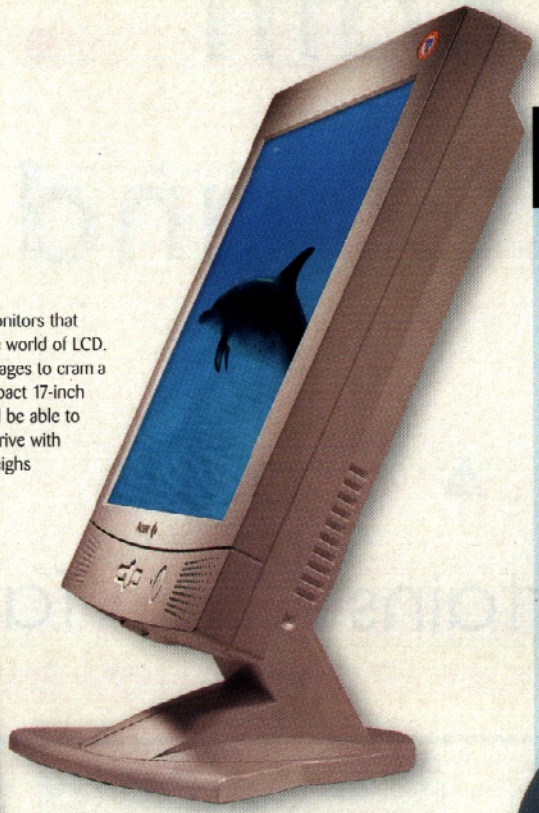
WAPPY DAYS

WE'RE FRANKLY TIRED of having to listen to flipping mobile phones chirping all over the shop, their self-centred owners chuckling with joy at the prospect of talking loudly for even longer. No, what we want is variety. That's why we're over the moon at this lovely phone from Sony which, apart from WAP capabilities and the like, affords you the not to be sniffed at opportunity of recording your very own sound to use as a ring. Might we dare to suggest that there's going to be a train full of people with shouting and screaming phones in the near future?

Product:	Stylus Photo 870 SE
Price:	£169.36 ex VAT
Contact:	www.epson.co.uk

BLUE IS THE COLOUR

MAYBE IT'S GOT something to do with the Elton John classic *Blue Eyes*, or those cheeky euro scampeteers Eiffel 65, but the future is definitely blue for the world of PC peripherals at the moment. This powerful printing device from Epson not only looks like the middle leg joints of a certain yellow and black buzzing insect, but it performs like an absolute dream. With 1440dpi output, you know you're not talking about beginners' stuff. We're particularly enamoured with the claim that prints from this baby will last ten years, due to some kind of 'lightfastness test'.



Product: FP751
Price: £999+VAT
Contact: www.acerperipherals.co.uk

SLIM JIM'LL FIX IT

IF, LIKE US, you've got one of those bulky monstrous monitors that takes up half the room, maybe it's time you shifted to the world of LCD. As flat as you could imagine, this wonder from Acer manages to cram a viewable area similar to a standard 19incher into its compact 17-inch screen. Resolutions of up to 1280x1024 mean that you'll be able to view those 'art' images you store secretly on your hard drive with more precision than ever before. What's more, it only weighs 7.7kgs, which is about five coke bottles, or something.

Product: Le Div@
Price: £2,499
Contact: www.packardbell.co.uk

SATURDAY NIGHT DIV@

JUST WHEN WE were starting to despair at the biegeness of the PC, along comes what might be the nicest computer setup you'll see. Aimed at those sick of having to keep their monstrous PC in a room of its own, Le Div@ comes in a fetching 'cool concrete & baby shell' colour scheme. It's got no horrible wires to clutter up your life, and is all connected by the magic of wireless RF. But you'll really start to froth at the mouth in excitement when you hear it doesn't have a CPU to speak of – everything is crammed into the monitor. Listen to this, though – it's only a bloody slimline LCD monitor, so your entire computer is effectively stored within a space a couple of inches wide. Please Santa, can we have one for Christmas?

Product: PowerMax 300/iC
Price: £35+VAT
Contact: www.teac.co.uk

I CAN SING A RAINBOW

WHILE THE WORLD of PC peripherals has gone all colour crazy and madcap, speakers still tend to have the visual appeal of a day old dunked Digestive biscuit. Finally, that could be about to end with these iMac-induced babies from Teac. The PowerMax 300/iC range is available in the simply sumptuous Blueberry, Graphite and Tangerine – or blue, grey and orange, as we prefer to call it in our simplistic brains. As you'd expect, there's all kinds of good sound-ness to sort your battered and beaten eardrums out, and for once you won't hurt your eyes looking at the bloody things.

news in brief

MORE NET GADGETS TO CREATE A FUSS DOWN AT DIXONS IN THE NEAR FUTURE

The shape of things to come

Sometimes in life, you've got to be honest, and now is one of those times. We don't actually know what this latest gizmo from Siemens does yet. Hell, the SX45 is such a new prototype that most of the people at Siemens are in the dark about its functionality. We assume it's all based around some kind of video-phone malarkey, but for the time being let's all just stare in awe at the beauty of this joyous invention.

Talking all over the world

BORED OF THE bogstandard appeal of talking loudly to your mates in inopportune places? Want something more from your mobile telecommunications device? Try the first global mobile phone from Siemens. Said to be a GSM tri-band phone with WAP, or something, we like it because you can use it anywhere in the world. We're also big fans of the impressive WAP display you can gorge your tired and weary eyes on every day, but most of all we like the S40 because it's swisher than James Bond making a swish noise with one of his fancy umbrella-cum-nuclear weapon things.

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net profile

Julian Turner: Moving Auntie online

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF BEEB VENTURES TELLS **ROBIN LEWIS** WHY THE BBC IS TREADING CAREFULLY ON THE NET

Working for the BBC is like taking a walk along the Gaza Strip; you have to watch where you're stepping, and there are always people sniping whichever way you turn. This is particularly true of BBC Worldwide, which has consistently drawn criticism by its mere existence; the commercial arm of a public service broadcaster.

Now there's a new twist; beeb ventures, the online subsidiary of Worldwide, has come into being. Beeb ventures is effectively a subsidiary of BBC Worldwide (though it is part-owned by an American company, THLi).

Ventures looks after beeb.com (a shopping portal) and freebeeb.net (a metered ISP soon to be rebranded as beeb.net). BBC Online is the public service Internet part of Auntie. Confusing, but then the BBC has always been keen to keep its commercial and public service sectors at arm's length.

At the head of beeb ventures is JulianTurner, ex-Director of Granada Online. He is the man charged with making money for Auntie in an increasingly volatile .com arena. His CV is very diverse. A degree in English and Drama, followed by work in the City and then for Oracle and IBM, before arriving at the fledgling online presence of Granada. Julian says: "I can describe the best convergence career path anyone's ever seen – with drama I've got content experience, I've got communications experience from being in the telecoms area and experience in the Internet from time with the IT industry. The Web was kind of invented for me, really."

One horse race?

The Web, yes – but what about the BBC? Beeb.com has just had a £7 million advertising push (mostly on commercial TV) and there have been mutterings from other .com movers and shakers. The BBC is monopolising commercial content on the Web using license fee money, they say. Julian is adamant that isn't the way beeb works: "We're not using any public service money for what we're doing. When we do work with [the BBC's] public service brands we pay a commercial rate for the use of those brands. It's not exclusive, and it doesn't come free."

The set up costs were met by a deal cut with ICL in 1996 – so no licence fee money has gone into beeb ventures at all. The argument that beeb ventures is trading on the BBC name remains, however: "Clearly there's an opportunity derived from an association with the BBC. To some extent we've got more constraints than a lot of other ventures, though. We're carefully regulated, and we have to be careful that anyone we associate with would uphold the things the BBC would."

Experience is the key

Perhaps because of this, Julian is steering beeb ventures away from young, inexperienced .coms: "Lots of them [.com start-ups] were going to fail from the day they launched. If you call a .com start-up someone who says "I've got a good idea", makes a load of noise and tries to get a load of money, I can't see us doing business with them. To some extent we're only going to be doing business with those people already established, but there's nothing to prevent big Internet brands coming in."

Despite this, the concern that beeb ventures will get wrapped up in potential .com failures is still a real one. For instance, beeb.net is steering clear of unmetered ISP access and beeb.com checks out all its partners with ruthless thoroughness. Yet accidents will happen: "Clearly, if something doesn't get delivered or something goes wrong folks are going to pick up the phone and ask us about it. Legally, it's not our problem – but we make it our problem.

"In terms of a partner going down, the risk is from individual items not being delivered. If that happened we would help the customer get their money back." This will never totally stifle the criticisms – which are largely, Julian argues, because all this is taking place on the Net: "The *Radio Times* has only ever been a commercial paper, it's never been public service and nobody complains about that. We're not there to rip anybody off. We want to have that relationship [with the BBC] but have our own business as well."

Julian Turner: eager to promote beeb.com as a business in its own right

FACTFILE

WHO? Julian Turner

AGE? 36

JOB? Chief Executive, beeb ventures limited

WORTH? Like many .coms, beeb ventures has yet to go into profit; but when US company THLi invested in the company its two subsidiaries – beeb.com and beeb.net – were valued at around £240m.

BACKGROUND? Born in Highgate, London, before moving between Henley, Tunbridge Wells and Cornwall. Went to Exeter University to study English and Drama. Followed this by going to the City, then – after the infamous Black Monday – moved into the telecoms industry and then the IT business with Olivetti and later, Oracle. Became the Director of Online and Interactive Media at Granada Online in March 1998, and joined beeb ventures in September 2000.

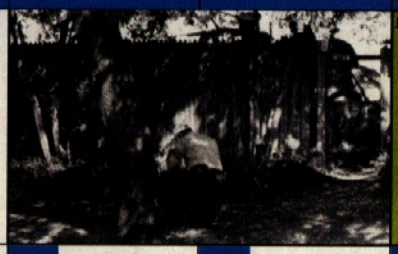
SIGNIFICANT OTHERS? Married to Debbie – no children, but two cats. Currently short one motorbike license, failed ("Gutted," he says, with feeling).

web diary

YOUR GUIDE TO WHAT'S HAPPENING ONLINE THIS MONTH

16 NOV – 13 DEC 2000

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY



16 Jennifer Lopez, Madonna and Eminem – among others – will be at the MTV Europe Awards tonight. **www.mtv.co.uk**

17 BBC Children In Need Appeal, which raised £12m on broadcast night last year, comes around again. **www.bbc.co.uk**

18 The wedding of Catherine Zeta Jones and Michael Douglas will take place very quietly (yeah, right) in the Plaza Hotel, New York. **www.michaeldouglas.com**

19 Calvin Klein, the US designer whose name is on men's pants everywhere, turns 58. He was born in the Bronx in New York, by the way. **www.absolutefashion.co.uk**

20 Gil-Scott Heron, jazz-funk maestro, plays the Jazz Café in Camden. **www.gilscottheron.com**

21 US President John F. Kennedy is assassinated by the CIA – sorry, a sniper's bullet – in Dallas, Texas, in 1963. **www.parascope.com**

22 The Media Boss of the Year prize-giving takes place at the Groucho Club in London. **www.pathfindersrecruitment.com**

23 The Network Q Rally of Great Britain – the biggest rally event of the year – starts in Cardiff. **www.motorsport.co.uk**

24 Dallas nightclub owner Jack Ruby shoots dead Lee Harvey Oswald, the prime suspect, live on American television. **www.webcom.com/~ctka**

25 The England vs Argentina rugby union Test takes place at Twickenham, while the rugby league World Cup Final kicks off at Old Trafford. **www.rfu.com, www.rugby-league.org**

26 A tribute to the great violinist Yehudi Menuhin takes place at the South Bank Centre, with a performance by his sister Yaltah. **www.glenngould.ca/menuprize.html**

27 *The Simpsons* have got a new video compilation and a box-set out featuring even more D'oh!-inducing episodes. **www.thesimpsons.com**

28 William Blake, English poet, painter and revolutionary socialist, was born in 1757. Which would make him 243, if he was alive. **www.williamblake.co.uk**

29 The second cricket Test in the England vs Pakistan series starts in Faisalabad. **www.cricinfo.com**

30 Miss World 2000 kicks off at the Millennium Dome in Greenwich. It will be presented by the ever-loving chat-show guru Jerry Springer. **www.missworldusa.com**

1 The creator of gonzo journalism, Hunter S. Thompson, publishes *Fear and Loathing In America*, the second volume of his letters. **www.fearandloathing.co.uk**

2 Billy Bragg, the nation's favourite left-wing singer-songwriter – plus support band The Blokes – plays the Barbican in London. **www.billybragg.co.uk**

3 Sainsbury's hosts the Choir of the Year 2000 at the Albert Hall. Expect Billy Bragg not to be there. **www.sainsburys.co.uk**

Sainsbury's
making life taste better

4 Whitney Houston releases *Heartbreak Hotel*, the third single from her Greatest Hits album. **www.whitney-houston.com**

5 Ian Hislop, *Private Eye* editor and *Have I Got News For You* regular, hosts a CBI evening celebrating small and medium business. **www.cbi.org.uk.**

6 George Custer, who made his famous last stand at Little Bighorn against the Indians, was born in 1839. **www.thehistorynet.com**

7 The third Test in the England vs. Pakistan series starts in Karachi. **www.cricinfo.com**

8 Dame Judi Dench, the current M in James Bond and Queen Victoria elsewhere, will be 66. **www.cineworld.co.uk**

9 JK Rowling, one of the most popular figures in English literature, makes a rare appearance to sign copies of *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* in Borders, Glasgow. **www.bloomsbury.com**

10 Playwright and activist Ken Saro-Wiwa was hanged in Nigeria in 1995, to widespread international outrage. **www.amnesty.org**

11 Chris de Burgh, Five and Savage Garden all play at various venues in London. Nasty. **www.5ive.co.uk**

12 Christies holds its annual sale of film and TV memorabilia. **www.christies.com.**

13 Dick Van Dyke, the man who created the least convincing cockney accent during the film *Mary Poppins*, will be 75. **www.imdb.com**

IN NEXT MONTH'S Practical internet

HIT THE SLOPES!

ON SALE 14 DECEMBER

Please note: All contents are in an advanced stage of preparation, but circumstances may prevent publication

WINTER HOLIDAYS SPECIAL

With the prospect of spending the Christmas fortnight huddled around the television with a box of chocs and your mother-in-law, you deserve a holiday. *Practical Internet* has compiled an invaluable guide to finding great value winter breaks online. We'll show you where to find the best last minute flights and bargain holidays.

WHY YOU MUST HAVE ADSL NET ACCESS

Turbo-charged Net access is finally affordable, so why are you still using that tortoise-driven 56k modem? In next month's issue, we explain what you need to get ADSL, how much it costs and where it's available. We'll compare the top services and will reveal Britain's best-value ADSL deal.

START YOUR OWN RADIO STATION!

Broadcast to the world with your very own Internet radio station. We'll show you how to transmit on the air – for free – and then add the service to your Web site for the world to hear!

HOW SAFE IS YOUR PC ONLINE?

Find out how to protect your PC from online viruses, file thieves and fraudsters. If you have a PC worth protecting, you must read this.

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Phone Number .....

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BACK CHAT

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK ABOUT PRACTICAL INTERNET AND THE NET IN GENERAL. EMAIL US AT PI@PARAGON.CO.UK AND YOU COULD WIN A PRIZE

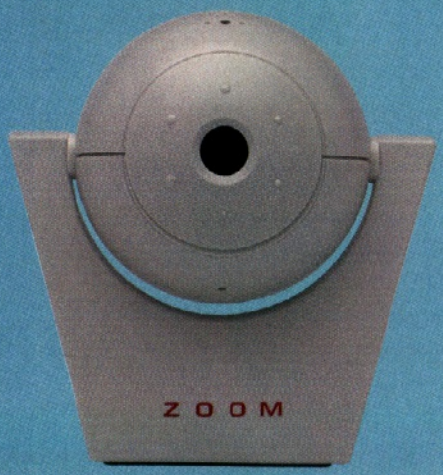
GOT SOMETHING TO SAY ABOUT THE MAGAZINE OR THE INTERNET IN GENERAL? HERE'S YOUR CHANCE. EMAIL US AT PI@PARAGON.CO.UK OR POST YOUR LETTERS THE OLD-FASHIONED WAY TO *PRACTICAL INTERNET*, PARAGON PUBLISHING, PARAGON HOUSE, ST PETER'S ROAD, BOURNEMOUTH, DORSET BH1 2JS

Competition winners

Winners of the two Creative Labs GeForce2 GTS video cards given away in issue 45 were G Redman (Kegworth, Derbyshire) and David Tomlinson (Timerley, near Manchester). Congrats to you all! See this month's mega £10,000 Web Fusion competition on page 55.

Letter of the month

Every month, the best letter we receive will win a splendid ZoomCam Webcam (pictured below). The camera is ideal for all sorts of multimedia applications including video capture, video mail and videoconferencing. Available in USB, PPC or ISA versions, these cameras are perfect for bridging the gap between distant family, friends and colleagues.



Letter of the month

Naughty, but not nice

Following your feature on online porn (November's *Practical Internet*), I'd like to take this chance to inform readers of the lurking dangers of sex sites.

A friend recently visited one such site and was re-directed through to two other services where he was shown a quick two-minute video file of a couple having sex.

This was all well and good (and much enjoyed, he says, at the time) until his phone bill came through a few days later. One of the two sites he'd visited charged him £87 and the other had cost him £63.00 – both without him realising it.

Needless to say, we found it highly amusing that two minutes of sex had cost him £150.00 when he could have bought a video at a fraction of the cost!

Apparently he hadn't actually logged out of the site. He'd just clicked the "x" in the top right hand corner and missed a button further down the page which would have logged him out of the site. Thus, the site was left open and was actually running in the background.

Sara Towers

We're sorry to hear your pal was ripped off, Sara. Money-making cons like this are rife among porn sites – a point that was made in last month's feature. The owners of such sites know that very few people who sign up to them want to risk any embarrassment by kicking up a stink. Few Net users admit to looking at porn – even though the majority do. Our advice is not to give credit card details to any porn Web sites.

Groups such as Cyberangels.org (www.cyberangels.org) want to protect you against porn

Porn piece was well balanced

Pornucopia (*Practical Internet*, November) was a well balanced look at the issue of pornography on the Net that is all too rare.

Coverage of the issue is often clouded by emotion and prejudice, creating a climate where the inevitable result is an out-and-out demand for censorship.

Some pornographic material has been produced in a way that is exploitative or coercive and it is understandable that people want to take issue with this. However, this is only a fraction of the material produced. As for the rest, people should be allowed to make up their own minds as to whether it is something they wish to view.

Censorship involves a third party making a decision about what is suitable for people. Tastes and standards vary considerably. What some may regard as obscene, for example Robert Mapplethorpe's homo-erotic images, may be seen by others as a form of art.

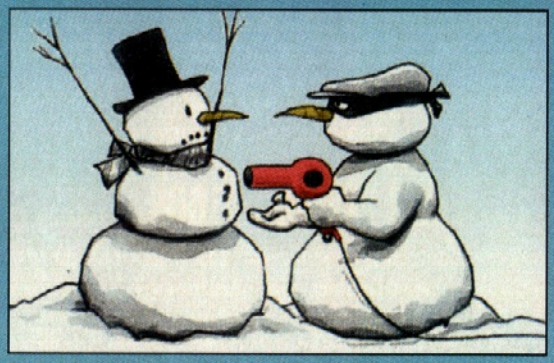
The decision as to whether that material should be viewed should be made by the individual adult user, based on their personal preferences. It shouldn't be made by someone trying to impose their prejudices on other people.

Dave Amis

Thank you for your comments, Dave. Total censorship is never the answer – but discussion is.

Attachment of the month

Holly Graham sent us this seasonal attachment entitled 'The Snowman Holdup'. There won't be a chilly reception for any more attachments like this. Snow way. [Enough – Ed]



Got a quirky or amusing email attachment that you'd like to share with other readers? Send it to pi@paragon.co.uk with the subject 'Attachment of the month'

Extreme sports enthusiasts should give Paul's site a try

Hire education

I have used the fully working version of HoTMetaL Pro 4.0 that you gave away with *Practical Internet* issue 40 to give my Web site a new look. The site at **www.hirekit.co.uk** provides links to hire equipment sites for extreme and outdoor sports enthusiasts.

The idea came to me while I was on holiday last year. Although I normally take my own windsurfing kit with me, I found some excellent hire shops in Fuerteventura.

The Canary Islands are a safe bet for getting windsurfing equipment, but for other locations I reckoned it would be very useful to be able to check what kit is available at holiday destinations before travelling. Hiring is also a very good way to try out a new sport before investing in expensive equipment.

The pictures on the site are a mixture of ones taken with my own camera and those given to me by a friend. Old contacts and the Web are some of the resources used to find suitable links.

I started working on the site in March using FrontPage Express, First Page 2000, Paint Shop Pro and Ulead GIF Animator and had the site online in April. Since then, I've used HoTMetaL Pro as my main programming tool.

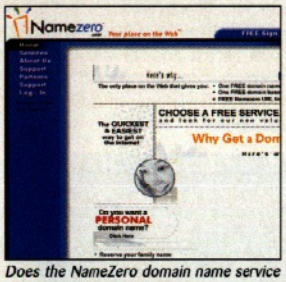
Paul Moore

Congrats on a useful site, Paul. We're sure extreme sports fans all over the world will use it.

We love to hear about readers' sites – send your story to pi@paragon.co.uk. Copies of issue 40 (with the CD featuring HoTMetaL Pro 4.0) can be ordered from our Back Issues department on 01202 200200. See page 145 for more details.

From hero to zero

Name Zero (**www.namezero.com**) sounded intriguing when I saw it in James Seabright's HTML Hack column in your August issue. The chance to get completely free .com, .net and .org domain names sounded almost too good to be true, but I signed up straight away.



Does the NameZero domain name service deserve zero marks?

Several weeks later, I am still waiting for my confirmation email. I have tried contacting them again and still had no response – is this service still working?

Robert Dalzell

James Seabright replies: "I am aware that some readers have had to wait a long time for NameZero to register their domain names. My domain took about a week to come through; yet a friend's was registered in under 24 hours.

"If you have been waiting for more than a week, it's best to email the the customer service department to verify they have received your registration request. They can be contacted at memberservices@namezero.com."

Solved... easily!

I've just read the letter from Trevor Edwards (Web Watchdog, November) regarding his domain name which he bought from Easily (**www.easily.co.uk**).

I have also purchased a domain from them and was advised by a friend not to transfer it but to have it redirected instead. Like me, Trevor uses a free ISP which will not host a domain name. My site (**www.imagesforhairextensions.co.uk**) works

WEB WATCHDOG

BEEN RIPPED OFF BY AN ISP OR ONLINE SHOP AND CAN'T GET A REPLY? SEND YOUR PROBLEMS TO OUR CANINE CONSUMER CRUSADER AT **WATCHDOG@PARAGON.CO.UK**

I can't chat with my TV!

I've bought an ONnet box from digital TV service ONdigital (**www.ondigital.co.uk**) in order to access the Web and use chat rooms on my TV. The service is very simple to use and can access most Web sites, although I have found that some which use JavaScripts do not work.

I telephoned the ONnet helpline to enquire if I would soon be able to access the chatrooms that use this technology and was told they didn't have any details on this. I was told that for the foreseeable future Java forums would not be available.

All the telephone operator could suggest was that I use Ask Jeeves (ONnet's default search engine) to find any non-Java run forums. As a complete beginner on the Net, I don't know any other way around this problem. Can you help?

David Whitmore

ONdigital told Web Watchdog: "We're delighted that David is finding ONnet easy to use. The ONnet box can support Flash, JavaScript and Shockwave. But there are some sites using particularly advanced forms of these plug-ins which the current software in the box may struggle with. However, the software in the box can and will be upgraded, so as time goes by, it will be able to access more of these sites.

"In addition, we anticipate that more of these Web sites will be designed to function with TV Internet boxes as Web site operators see the growth of this market. We are planning to launch chat services on the box but do not yet have a date when this will be available."

Read* Practical Internet's *review of the ONnet service on page 100.

Not as Eze as we hoped

I think I may have become the victim of Internet fraud. With the help and advice from my son-in-law, we signed up with the freephone Internet service provider Ezesurf at **www.ezesurf.co.uk**.

I wanted a free Internet connection without any phone connection charges. This should have cost me £97, which we made with my Barclaycard. I received an initial connection which worked fine.

I was supposed to have got another phone number sent to me which would have allowed me to connect to the Internet free of phone charges which my son-in-law had been getting.

However, they now seem to have disappeared along with my £97. Also, their phone number (0870 444 4211) is completely unobtainable.

Please look into this as it's money I cannot afford to lose. I could have used it to get a connection elsewhere. Any help you can give me will be very gratefully received. Where abouts should I look for a more reliable service to give me free connection charges?

Martin Whapshare

As we reported here in last month's Practical Internet, EzeSurf has gone out of business. If you want to contact the ISP, you will need to write to it at this address: The Liquidator, EzeSurf, 11-19 Buchanan Street, Dundee, DD4 6SD.

For a new unmetered ISP, we'd suggest you read our feature '0800: Dead Or Alive?' in last month's issue where we tested ten top services. Both AOL and PlusNet came out on top. If you missed it, see page 145 for details on how to order a back issue.

ONnet is great for getting the Internet on your TV, but isn't so hot when it comes to using chat rooms

WEB WATCHDOG

BEWARE OF THE DOG!

Forget the hype about Internet auctions...

I was very interested to read your recent feature article on online auctions (*Practical Internet*, October) and thought you'd be interested in hearing about the difficulties that can be experienced from such sites.

I have had problems in getting my money back from Bluecycle.com (**www.bluecycle.com**) which has failed to supply me with three hard drives that I bought. After registering with the site, I successfully bid for and paid for the goods that I wanted. However, two months later I have still not received the products even though I paid for them in full via Bluecycle.com's bank account by following the instructions given by one of their staff.

After stating that they cannot provide the goods as originally sold to me, I have now received a refund payment of £33.74 for the order that was cancelled by Bluecycle.com. No apology was offered by the company for the inconvenience caused and my request for compensation for the cost incurred to me appears to have been totally ignored.

I remain extremely dissatisfied with the appaling treatment that I have received from them.

Sean Parry

Craig Brown, Team Leader of BlueCycle.Com's customer services department, told Web Watchdog: "Mr Parry won an auction on the Bluecycle.com Web site created by one of our suppliers. After he had won the auction and deposited payment into our secure escrow account, the supplier then contacted us stating that they could not supply the goods in question. Our customer services team then contacted Mr Parry to offer an apology for the inconvenience that this caused as well as refunding his payment from our escrow account.

"We also informed Mr Parry that as a result of this issue we had suspended the supplier in question and have since removed them completely from the Bluecycle.com site. This has been done in an effort to ensure that none of our users encounter problems like those experienced by Mr Parry in the future.

"It is unfortunate that Mr Parry feels that the treatment that he has received from us is not up to the standard that he would expect. At all times we have kept him informed and have offered a full refund and apology for any inconvenience caused. We sincerely wish Mr Parry lots of luck in any auctions in which he is currently bidding."

using this method. The only difference is that when you type the domain in the address bar you can see your user name at the bottom of the screen and as my usemame includes the word 'images', this works fine for me.

Easily has a very good help desk and soon responded when I needed them. My advice to Trevor is to redirect it and not transfer it.

Michelle Evans

Thanks, Michelle. Easily gets the thumbs up from us too – their site is really simple to use and takes the hassle out of buying domain names.

Out of this world!

I have come across a new phenomena on the Web – a relaxation site which has had a really profound effect on me.

The site consists of abstract animation and music. After watching the healing page, my work stresses and slight headache disappeared.

I thought that your magazine might be the best place to find out whether **www.mezzowave.com** is a one-off or if there any other similar sites offering a similar experience.

*Let this chap at **www.mezzowave.com** make your daily cares drift away*

I felt the space in my room had increased after visiting the site – even after I switched the computer off. The feeling was different, almost celestial. It really addressed my need for relaxation. How did they do it?

Margaret Warner

That's a great site for easing pre-Christmas worries, Margaret. We haven't come across similar sites before but agree it's definitely one to visit when the stresses of life start to take their toll – although the alien chap is a little spooky. If only he could solve financial worries too!

How do I buy domain names without a PC?

I am a complete novice to the Internet and don't have a PC but I am interested in profits to be made from buying domain names. I have thought of several names, but don't know how I can check

Find out which domain names are still available using 123-reg

whether someone owns them already. Also, if no-one has got the name, how do I register them? And how do I sell the name on?

Anne Honarfar

Take a trip to your nearest library, Anne. It will have a PC connected to the Internet that you can use. Type the Web site address of a domain name register such as 123-reg (www.123-reg.co.uk) into the Web browser – many other companies are advertised in this issue – and enter the name of the domain name you want to buy.

If it's still available, you'll be able to buy it straight away using your credit card. To sell your domain name, have a look at Great Domains (www.greatdomains.com). You should also read Practical Internet's feature on selling domain names in issue 46 – order yourself a copy today by calling 01202 200200.

FREE NET LEGAL ADVICE

LEGAL AID

RICHARD COHEN, CO-FOUNDER OF THE DESKTOP LAWYER (WWW.DESKTOPLAWYER.NET), ANSWERS YOUR INTERNET LEGAL QUESTIONS FOR FREE

Email us at watchdog@paragon.co.uk with the subject 'Legal Aid' and we will forward your question on to Richard

My site's been nicked

I run FreebieList.com (**www.freebielist.com**) and am considering legal proceedings against a person in South Africa. He has taken my entire site content and is using it on his three domain names and various other sub-domains. He has even promoted it on search engines using my title 'FreebieList.com', although sometimes he uses the title 'Freebies For Life'.

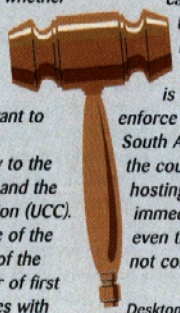
He doesn't make any effort to hide the fact, either. All the content (apart from my recent additions) has been ripped off. He has even left reference to my site on the 'link to us' and the 'suggest a freebie' sections. He uses my images, text and even my slogan "Keeping an eye the Web's best freebies". What can I do?

Andrew Varley

The copyright of your site has been breached. The copying need not be identical, but it must be enough to reproduce the essential feature or a significant extract. The test is whether the copying has been qualitative rather than quantitative. There are occasions when copying is permitted. They are not relevant to your situation.

South Africa is a signatory to the Berne Copyright Convention and the Universal Copyright Convention (UCC). The UCC system requires use of the copyright symbol, the name of the copyright owner and the year of first publication. Your site complies with these requirements.

You have a number of options to protect your copyright. You may seek an injunction that prohibits further use of your content. You may also seek compensation. This is calculated either as your loss of profit caused by the infringement or the licence fee that would have had to be paid to you for use of the content. There is a reciprocal arrangement to enforce an English judgement in South Africa. Finally with an order of the court, it is probable that the ISP hosting the offending site would immediately remove the content, even though the legal position is not completely clear.



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on the front of this issue

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LINEONE

† Offer open to all LineOne members. Vouchers will be emailed to your LineOne address. Offer ends 15th December 2000.

SOLVED!

50 TOP TROUBLE SHOOTING TIPS

Fifty of your most common Net problems sorted by *Practical Internet's* resident troubleshooter, **Clive Parker**

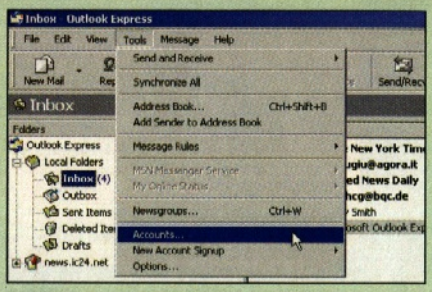
Whether you are a Net newcomer or a seasoned surfer, the Internet can be baffling and very troublesome. Since every Net connection relies on computer hardware, a modem, a phone line and software, it only takes one tiny problem to bring the whole lot down.

That's why we've put together this complete troubleshooting guide to the 50 most common problems. You might not need it today, but we're sure it'll come in handy in the future. For this reason, it's worth keeping for future reference.

We've had a look at email, Web browsers, modems, Internet service provider (ISP) problems and many other common hassles in this invaluable guide.

Best of all, the solutions are simple and easy to follow – you don't have to be a raving technophile to be able to sort them out.

SETTING UP SERVER



1 **Your account**

Open Outlook Express and go to the 'Tools' Menu. From the menu select the 'Accounts...' command. Your server details are available from your service provider.

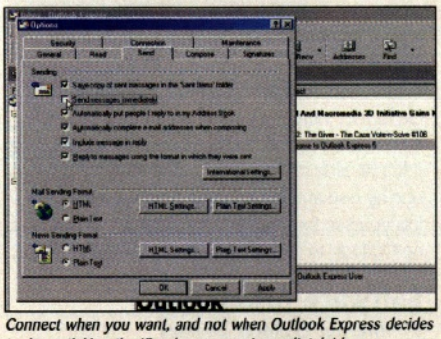
Email problems

1. Outlook Express connects to the Net when you open it

You don't always want to connect to the Net when you open Outlook, do you? You may just want to compose a poignant love letter. Go to the 'Tools' menu and select the 'Options' command. Click on the 'General' tab and make sure that the 'Send and receive messages at startup' box is not ticked and you'll only connect when you want to, not when Outlook feels like it.

2. Outlook Express connects when you create an email

If you are replying to emails received or composing new email offline, you don't want to connect to the Internet every time you send a new message. It saves you time and money online if you send all of your messages at once. To stop Outlook Express connecting, go to the 'Tools' menu and select the 'Options' command. Click on the 'Send' tab and uncheck the 'Send messages immediately' checkbox.



Connect when you want, and not when Outlook Express decides to, by unticking the 'Send messages immediately' box

3. The spell checker does not work

When you are using Outlook Express to compose email, you may notice that the Spelling command in the Tools menu is 'greyed out', so you can't use it. This is because Outlook does not use a built-in spell checker, it uses the spell checker supplied with Word 97 or Word 2000. Put simply, you cannot use the spell checker if you do not have Microsoft Word installed. The simple answer is for you to install it. It's not that expensive these days.

4. The BCC field is missing

When you are composing an email in Outlook Express you cannot insert a BCC (Blind Carbon Copy) email address to send a secret copy to your lover or a business rival. This is because the field is missing. To remedy this, go to the 'View' menu of the message that you are composing and select the 'All Headers' command. This will automatically display the BCC field below the CC field of the message.

5. Unable to style text

When you are creating a new email message in Outlook Express, you can't change the font face, size, colour and the message formatting. This is annoying if you want your emails to look as nice as possible. To fix this, go to the 'Tools' menu and select the 'Options' command. Click on the 'Send' tab and select the 'HTML' checkbox in the Mail Sending Format section. End result, gorgeous looking email messages for all.

6. Wrong email address attached to new message

You want to make sure that people send their replies to the right email address, don't you? Unfortunately, all new email messages are sent with the default account address attached as standard. To select a specific email address for each message you compose click on the 'From' field just below the toolbar icons. In the pop-up menu, select the appropriate account for the message you are sending.

7. Setting up server details

If Outlook Express somehow loses its server settings, or if you want to add another email server to it, you may have to manually change the settings. This isn't that difficult – for more details see the box out below.

You need Word 97 or Word 2000 installed if you want to spell check emails. Find out more from ***www.microsoft.com/uk***

JARGON BUSTER

Cookie
A cookie is a block of data that a Web server stores on your PC. When you return to the Web site, the browser sends a copy of the cookie back to the server.

Modem
A modem is a device for converting computer data into a form that can be sent over telephone lines and then converted back to its original state.

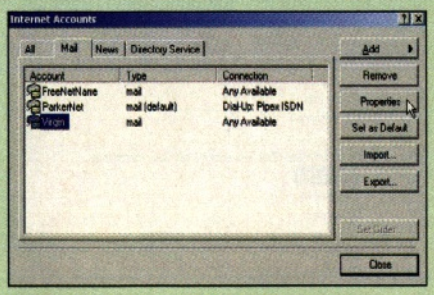
Email
Messages sent over the Internet using the standard now common to all systems. .

Dial-up account
A dial-up account is made up for the information required to connect to the Internet. It includes the phone number of your ISP and your username and password.

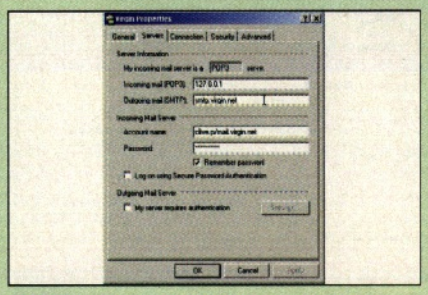
Internet
This is the name given to the worldwide collection of networks that use a standard protocol called TCP/IP to communicate with each other.

ISP
An Internet service provider is the company that gives you access to the Net.

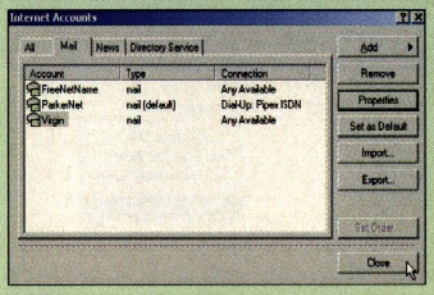
DETAILS IN OUTLOOK EXPRESS



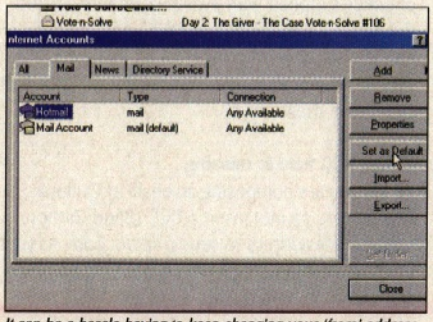
2 Make the changes
When the Internet Accounts window opens, select the email account you want to modify of fix and select the 'Properties' button on the right.



3 Your server information
Click on the 'Servers' tab to see the Server Information. In the Incoming Mail (POP3) box, type in your POP3 server address. In the Outgoing Mail (SMTP) type in the SMTP address.



4 Save the settings
After you have entered the correct settings click the 'OK' button to return to the main Internet Accounts window. Click on the 'Close' button to save the settings.



It can be a hassle having to keep changing your 'from' address if you have more than one account. But it's easy to default

8. Incorrect default address

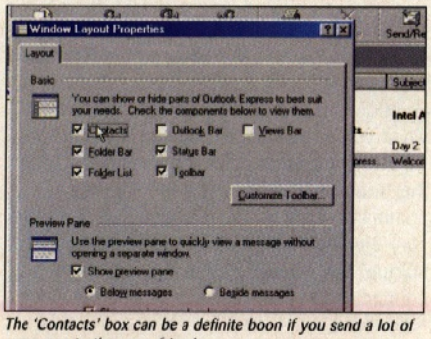
If you've recently added a new email account to Outlook Express, you'll probably want to set it up as the default when you create new messages. It's a simple adjustment. Go to the 'Tools' menu and select the 'Accounts' command. When the Internet Accounts window opens, select the account you want to set up as the default and click the 'Set as Default' button.

9. Missing contacts list

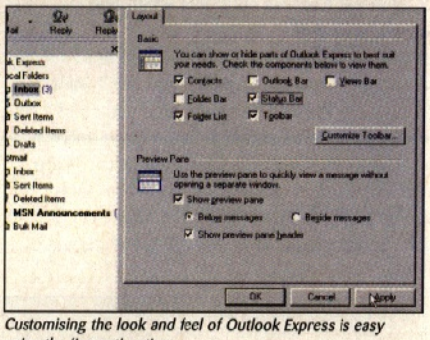
It's a pain having to open the address book every time you want to plonk an email address into a message. To make things easier, go to the 'Views' menu and select the 'Layout…' command. When the Layout window opens, tick the 'Contacts' box and click 'OK'. A new window called Contacts appears. To send a message to anyone in the list, double-click on the name.

10. Customised layout

Outlook Express has a bunch of different settings for controlling the way it looks. Go to the 'View' menu and select the 'Layout…' command. When the Layout window opens, drag it to one side and then start changing the settings one by one and clicking the 'Apply' button. This lets you see exactly what happens so you can set up Outlook to look exactly how you want it. Nice.



The 'Contacts' box can be a definite boon if you send a lot of messages to the same friends



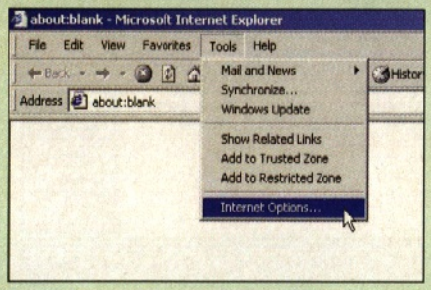
Customising the look and feel of Outlook Express is easy using the 'Layout' option

Software problems

11. Internet Explorer cookies

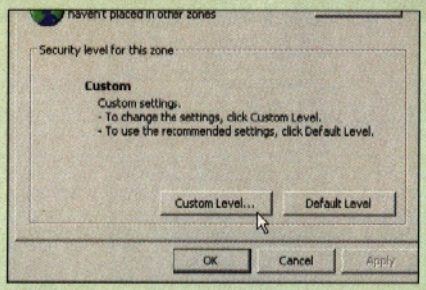
You can disable cookies in Internet Explorer 5.5, although the feature is hidden away. Go to the 'Tools' menu of Internet Explorer 5.5 and select the 'Internet Options' command. Click on the 'Security' tab and click the 'Custom Level' button. Scroll down the 'Settings' list until you find 'Cookies' and select the 'Disable' button. See the tutorial below.

DISABLING COOKIES IN INTERNET EXPLORER 5.5



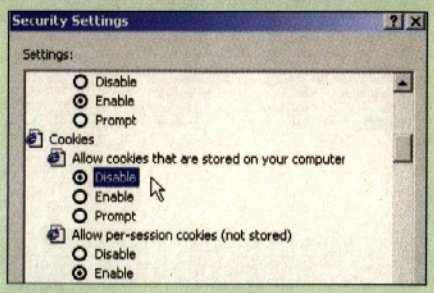
1 **Open Internet Explorer**

Open Internet Explorer 5.5 and go to the 'Tools' menu. When the menu opens, select the 'Internet Options' command.



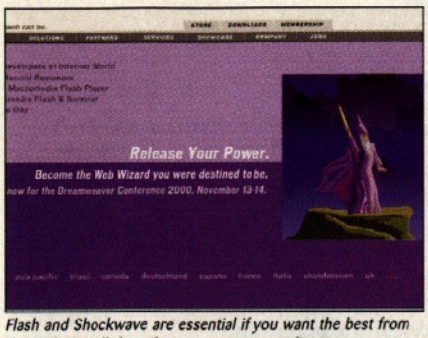
2 **The security level**

When the Internet options control panel opens, click the 'Security' tab. In the bottom half of the window you can set the security level. Click on the 'Custom Level' button.

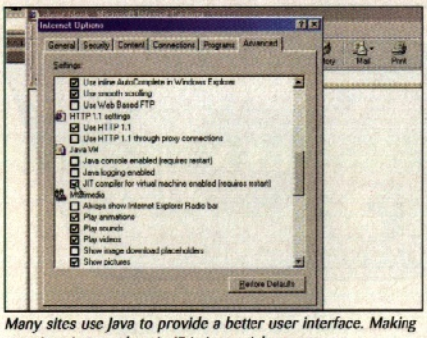


3 **Disable the cookies**

When the Security Setting window opens, scroll down the list until you find the Cookies section. To switch off cookies, click on the 'Disable' radio button.



Flash and Shockwave are essential if you want the best from the Web. Install them from ***www.macromedia.com***



Many sites use Java to provide a better user interface. Making sure Java is turned on in IE is just a tick away

12. Java applets don't work
There's nothing more annoying than when you have a blank space on a Web page where an exciting Java applet is supposed to be merrily doing its funky thing. If an applet doesn't work in your browser, it's probably because Java is turned off. Open Internet Options and select 'Advanced'. Scroll down to the Microsoft VM section and make sure that 'JIT compiler for virtual machine' is enabled.

13. Can't see Web animations
Many Web sites use Flash and Shockwave animation as standard parts of their design. If you haven't got either of these plug-ins installed, then you are going to miss out on loads of great stuff. To get the plug-ins for both Internet Explorer and Netscape Communicator, go to the Macromedia Web site at **www.macromedia.com** and go to the downloads page and follow the instructions on screen. After you have completed the installation, you'll be able to see Flash and Shockwave content to your heart's content.

RealPlayer is another essential item for your Web browsing experience. Pick it up from ***www.real.com***

14. RealPlayer isn't connecting
If you have RealPlayer you may find that it can't connect to content on the Web as it needs your service provider's proxy server settings to be set up. To fix this, open RealPlayer and then select the 'Preferences' command in the 'View' menu. Click on the Proxy tab and go to 'HTTP Options'. Now select the 'Use my browser's HTTP proxy' radio button and you will be able to hear sweet music.

15. Video image is too small
If you want to get the best from RealPlayer, you really should set it up to play video at full-screen size. It's easy to set up. Open RealPlayer and then select the 'Preferences' command in the 'View' menu. Click on the 'Display' tab and then click the 'Full Screen Test' button. RealPlayer will check that it can display video in full-screen mode on your PC.

16. Wrong file formats
When you are uploading your files to your Web site using FTP, it's always important to ensure that files are transferred in the correct format. Images should be uploaded as binary files and HTML pages as ASCII. In your FTP program, go to the 'Preferences' and select the 'File Types' from the 'File Associations' option. Type in the extensions you wish to register as ASCII files such as .HTML and .JS.

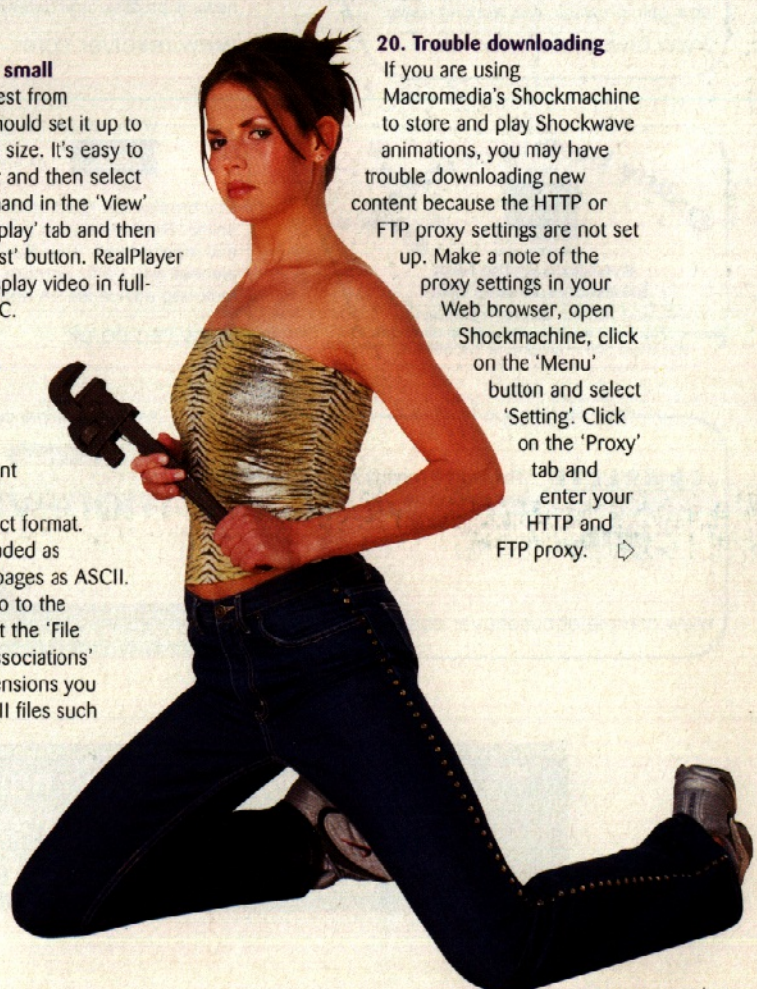
17. Font problems
If you are using Netscape Communicator 4.75, you may notice that Web pages are displayed using the wrong fonts. To remedy this, go to the 'Edit' menu and select the 'Preferences' command. Scroll though the list and select the 'Fonts' option. Use the pop-up menu to specify the Variable Width Font you want to use and select the font size, 12 is the normal choice. Once you've decided on this, save your settings.

18. Can't use Netscape Messenger with IE?
It is always much more efficient to use Netscape Messenger as your email program when you send email to links in Web pages. To associate Netscape Messenger with Internet Explorer 5.5, start by going to the 'Tools' menu and selecting 'Internet Options'. Click on the 'Programs' tab and then select 'Netscape Messenger' from the Email pop-up menu. The next time that you click on an email link on a Web page, Netscape Messenger opens.

19. Don't want Netscape cookies?
If you are worried about cookies tracking you when you visit Web sites using Netscape Communicator 4.75, you can switch them off. Go to the 'View' menu of Netscape and select the 'Preferences' command. Scroll down the 'Category' list until you find the Advanced section. In the Cookies section, click on the 'Disable Cookies' radio button and save the settings. Netscape Communicator 4.75 is now cookie free.

20. Trouble downloading
If you are using Macromedia's Shockmachine to store and play Shockwave animations, you may have trouble downloading new content because the HTTP or FTP proxy settings are not set up. Make a note of the proxy settings in your Web browser, open Shockmachine, click on the 'Menu' button and select 'Setting'. Click on the 'Proxy' tab and enter your HTTP and FTP proxy. ▷

4 Save the settings
Click on the 'OK' button to save the settings and close the window, then click on the 'OK' button in Internet Options to save your settings.



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www.easy4internet.co.uk

BROWSER PROBLEMS

21. AutoComplete doesn't work
AutoComplete is a handy feature that predicts what address you are typing into the address bar of Internet Explorer 5.5. Sometimes this option can get switched off. To reinstate AutoComplete, go to the 'Tools' menu of Internet Explorer 5.5 and select 'Internet Options'. Click on the 'Content' tab then click on 'AutoComplete'. In the Settings box, select the 'Web Addresses' checkbox to switch it on.

22. Changing home page settings
You probably don't want to go to the home page that has been preset in Internet Explorer by your service provider. Luckily it's pretty easy to change the settings so you can go to any other page you like. Load the page you want as your home page then go to the 'Tools' menu and select 'Internet Options'. Click the 'General' tab then click the 'Use Current' button.

23. Don't connect
If you don't want to connect to the Internet every time you open Internet Explorer 5.5 then there are couple of ways to avoid this. Go to the 'Tools' menu and select the 'Internet Options' command . Click the 'General' tab and select the 'Use Blank' button in the Home Page section. Alternatively, click on the 'Connections' tab and select the 'Never dial a connection' radio button.

24. Wrong connection
You've got several different service provider connections set up but Internet Explorer 5.5 always tries to connect using the wrong one. To remedy this, go to the 'Tools' menu and open 'Internet Option's. Click on the 'Connection' tab and then select the service provider you want to use in the list. Now click on the 'Set Default' button. Internet Explorer 5.5 will always use this connection to get online.

25. Printing backgrounds
When you print out a Web site that uses a coloured background, you'll probably find that the page is almost impossible to read and uses up all of your precious ink. To disable this, go to the 'Tools' menu and select the 'Internet Options' command. Click the 'Advanced' tab and scroll down until you find the Printing option. Deselect the 'Print background colors and images' checkbox.

26. Sound and video won't play
If you visit a page with multimedia content, you may find that sound and video won't play, or perhaps images won't display. To fix this, go to the 'Tools' menu and select the 'Internet Options' command. Click the 'Advanced' tab and scroll to the Multimedia section. There are several options here, you should select 'Play Animations', 'Play Videos', 'Play Sounds', 'Show Pictures', 'Show Image Download Placeholders' and 'Smart Image Dithering'.

27. Organise Favorites
Is your Favorites folder a long, long list of shortcuts? If it is, you have to organise it. Click on the 'Favorites' button and then click the 'Organize' button at the top of the Favorite pane. Use the Organize Favorites control panel to create new themed folders then drag the existing shortcuts into these folders. In this way you can have a very useful themed Favorites setup in Internet Explorer 5.5.

28. Searching history
Have you ever visited a great Web page and forgotten to bookmark it? Don't worry, the page is probably stored in Internet Explorer 5.5's History list. Click on the 'History' icon in the toolbar and then select 'Search'. When the search form appears, type in a word that you know appeared on the Web page you are after then click the 'Search' button. The page you are looking for should be listed.

29. Refreshing pages
Sometimes you know a Web page has changed, but Internet Explorer 5.5 still shows an old version that's stored on your hard drive. To stop this happening, go to 'Tools' and select 'Internet Option's. In the General tab, click on the 'Settings' button in the Temporary Internet Files section. In the Settings window, select the 'Every visit to the page' radio button. You should also click the 'Delete Files' button.

30. Moving favorites between browsers
You can share the same set of Favorites between browsers by using the Import and Export commands. To export your Favorites, go to the 'File' menu and select 'Import and Export'. In the wizard, select 'Export Favorites' and then select the folder you want to export. You can export directly to Netscape on your own PC or save it as a file that can then be imported into Internet Explorer.

ISP problems

31. Keep those details handy
When you join a service provider, always make a note of any settings and username and passwords. You will need your username and password if you have to recreate email and dial-up settings, and also if you have to contact technical support.

32. Email server settings
You may lose your email settings if you have problems with your PC,so write them down so you can reinstate them if required. To find your mail server settings, go to the 'Tools' menu of Outlook Express and select 'Accounts'. Select your mail account and select 'Properties', then click the 'Server' tab. Take note of the incoming (POP3) and outgoing (SMTP) server details.

33. Browser proxies
A proxy server is simply a special Web server that speeds up Web use. You may have to add the settings manually with details from your service provider. To do this, go to the 'Tools' menu of Internet Explorer and then select 'Internet Options' and click the 'Connections' tab. Now click on the 'Setting's button, click 'Use a proxy server' and click 'Advanced'. Now you just have to type the settings provided into the text fields.

If you have two service providers, you can set up both email accounts with the same server details, like Virgin, for instance

34. Use a different mail server
If you have more than one service provider you know what a pain it is to disconnect from one and then connect to the other to send email. But you don't have to do that. If you have a Virgin and ClaraNet account, you can set up both accounts with the Virgin SMTP server details. This means you can connect to Virgin, collect mail from both accounts simultaneously and reply through the Virgin server.

35. Newsgroup usernames
Some service providers will not let you use their news server unless you enter your account name and password into Outlook Express. Go to the 'Tools' menu and select 'Accounts'. Click the 'News' tab and check the box labelled 'This server requires me to log on.' Type your username and password into the boxes.

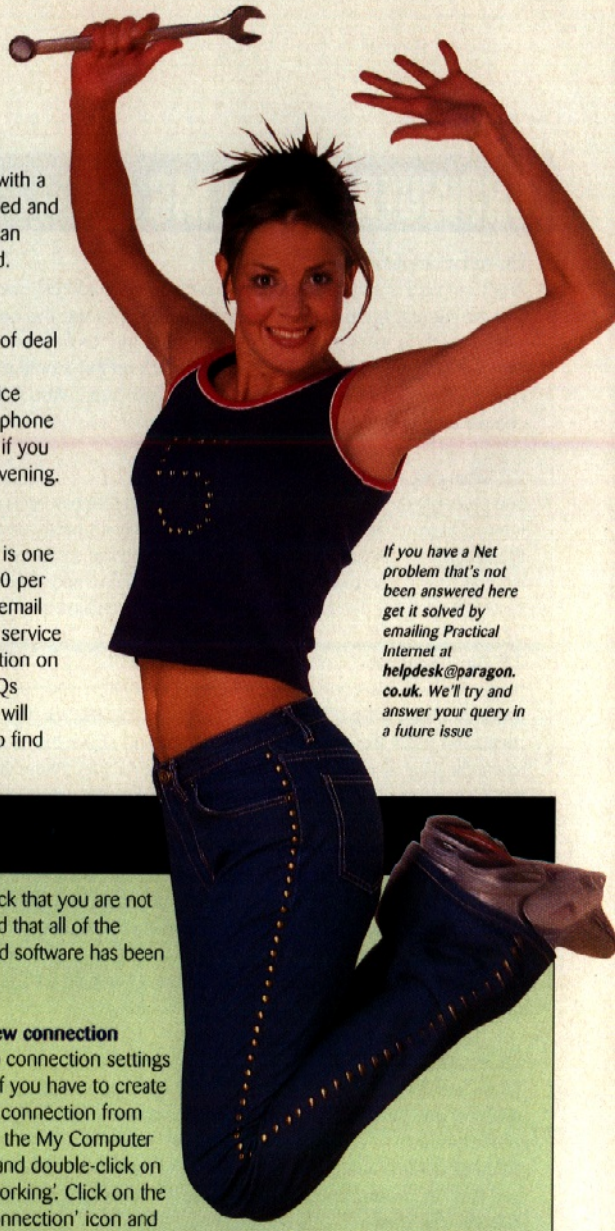
36. Use Netscape Communicator
The vast majority of ISPs supply you with Internet Explorer 5 but you can also use Netscape. Download the latest version from the Netscape Web site or install it from the cover CD, connect to the Internet in the usual way and then run the Netscape browser.

37. Browser customisation
When you install your ISP software, Internet Explorer 5 is installed as standard and usually uses customised graphics and logos. You can change this quite easily by downloading Internet Tweak 2000 from **www.magellass.com**. The program lets you modify many aspects of Internet Explorer 5.

38. Just say 'yes'
If you get stuck in a long conversation with a pay-as-you-go support desk, use the tried and tested 'I've done that' method so you can speak to someone a little more qualified.

39. Is it free?
Make sure you know exactly what kind of deal you are getting with your 'free' Internet service. Remember that with most service providers you still have to pay for your phone calls, so the cost can quickly mount up if you spend a couple of hours online every evening.

40. Don't phone, email
Finally, if your Internet service provider is one of those that charges 50p or even £1.00 per minute for telephone support, send an email or log on to the Web site instead. Most service providers have a dedicated support section on their Web sites with comprehensive FAQs about the most common problems you will come across. You should also be able to find their support email address, too.



*If you have a Net problem that's not been answered here get it solved by emailing Practical Internet at **helpdesk@paragon.co.uk**. We'll try and answer your query in a future issue*

MODEM PROBLEMS

41. Slow connection
You've got a superfast 56K modem but you only get slow connection speeds. Go to the 'Start' menu and select 'Setting', 'Control Panel' and then open the 'Modem' properties. Select your modem from the list – it is probably the only one – and select 'Properties'. Click on the 'Maximum Speed' drop-down list and select '115200' and check the 'Only connect at this speed' checkbox to ensure 56K connections.

42. It's so loud
You're probably familiar with the reassuring squeal of the modem as it connects, but what if it's too loud? You can change the volume level of your modem quite simply. Go to the 'Start' menu and select 'Settings', 'Control Panel' and open the Modem properties. Select your modem and click on 'Properties', then use the volume slider to change the volume setting.

43. No dial tone
Your modem has been working okay for ages when you suddenly get a message saying that it can't connect because there is no dial tone. Bummer. Luckily the solution to this problem is usually pretty darn simple. Check those modem cables because one has probably come loose or become unplugged.

44. Modem disconnects
Sometimes your modem disconnects at random times and intervals in the most annoying way. This is usually a problem if you have call waiting set up on your phone line. When a call comes in, it sends a half-second beep down the line and disconnects the modem. Disable call waiting before connection to the Internet, your phone provider can give you details on how to disable it.

45. Won't connect to ISP
Your modem makes the usual insane squeals but can't connect to the remote modem. You may have to change your connection settings. Open the Modem control panel and select your modem in the list, then click on 'Properties''. Click on the 'Connection' tab and set Data Bits to 8; Parity to None and Stop Bits to 1, then click on 'OK' to save these settings.

46. Currently in use
One of the most annoying error messages you get is the unusual 'the modem is already in use' message that occasionally pops up. It may be that you have already connected to the Net using a different service provider or you may have another program running such as a terminal program of fax software. Check that you are not connected and that all of the modem related software has been closed down.

47. Make a new connection
If your dial-up connection settings disappear or if you have to create a new dial-up connection from scratch, go to the My Computer icon, open it and double-click on 'Dial-Up Networking'. Click on the 'Make new connection' icon and follow the step-by-step instructions on-screen. You will need your account username, password and dial-up phone number to create a new or replacement Dial-up Networking connection.

48. Disconnect automatically
It's quite easy to forget that you are connected the Internet. You need to set up your modem so it will disconnect automatically after a set period of time. Go to the 'My Computer' icon and open it, then open the 'Dial-Up Networking' folder. Right-click on your service provider's connection and select 'Properties'. Select the 'Options' tab and choose 10 minutes in the 'Idle time before hanging up' pop-up menu.

49. Redial automatically
If your service provider is busy you can set up your modem to redial automatically until you get a connection. Go to the 'My Computer' icon and open it, then open Dial-Up Networking. Right-click on your service provider's connection and select 'Properties'. Select the 'Options' tab and set the number of redials in the 'Redial attempts' window and the time between each redial in the 'Time between redial attempts' window.

50. Your modem doesn't work
You've just installed a replacement modem, tried to connect to the Internet and got a message telling you that the modem does not exist or is not plugged in. Yet you can see it on your desk. Go to the 'My Computer' icon and double-click it, then double-click on 'Dial-up Networking'. Right-click on your IPS's connection icon and select 'Properties'. Now select the new modem from the list.

Something to watch out for when choosing a hosting company

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Whole lotta hoaxing going on

The Internet is a hotbed for hoaxes and scams. **Matthew Holbrook** takes a look at some of the pranks that have been played over the years

Hoaxes and scams have been occurring for centuries, way before the Internet was available. However, the nature of the Net means that they can quickly be circulated to a wide audience, at no cost to the originator. Because people are joining the Web all the time, some of these messages could be in circulation for many years to come.

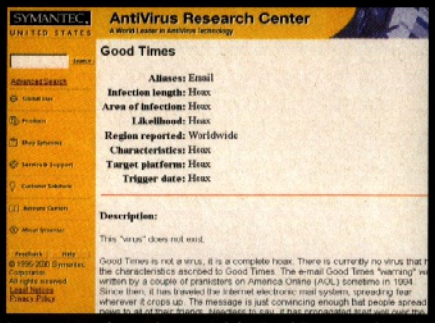
Scams are generally aimed at extracting money from gullible users. Hoaxes are created to waste time, and to give the perpetrator satisfaction when warnings are still circulating years later. The growth of the Internet means this problem is increasing all the time. According to the North American Securities Administrators' Association, Internet scams now hold the number one position in the top ten scams' list. And the US National Fraud Information Centre confirms that Internet fraud is a thriving business.

Scams and hoaxes normally arrive as unsolicited email, perhaps forwarded from people you know. Sometimes Web sites are set up to appear as bona-fide eCommerce operations. In most cases, the scam involves the recipient sending away money as an 'administration fee'. If they receive anything in return, it will normally be something that's ;worthless.

We're going to take a look at some of the most famous hoaxes and scams that have plagued the Net and just to make sure you don't get your fingers burnt, there's also some handy hints on how to spot a scam.

Let the Good Times roll

The Good Times hoax has probably travelled more miles around the Internet than any other. Going right back to 1994, this hoax was created by a group of college students and it's turned up in the inboxes of a large percentage of Internet population. Its success can be put down to the time it was written. Although there were other hoaxes before it, the Good Times hoax was sufficiently worrying for those not in the know. But for other users, the signs of a hoax were clear.



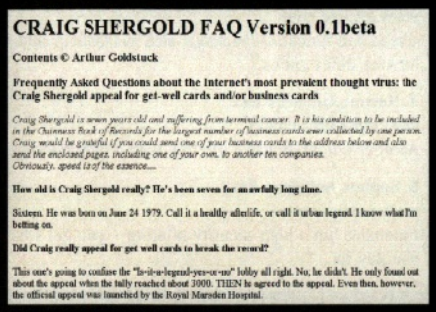
*You can get a thorough report of the Good Time virus from the Symantic Web site (**www.symantic.com**)*

The message starts off by getting the recipient's attention with "Here is some important information." It then talks about a "dangerous new virus," that was supposedly written by an AOL user. Most recipients of the message would be able to relate to all this. Credibility is then added with the statement "The FCC released a warning last Wednesday concerning a matter of major importance to any regular user of the Internet." A vague date is essential for a hoax to propagate for years to come.

Also included is the essential line "Forward this to all your friends." And users are advised that existing viruses are nowhere near it when it comes to destructive power. A few viruses of the day are mentioned for good measure – such as Stoned and Michaelangelo. Of course, there never was a Good Times virus. But this warning has wasted far more working time than any virus could. If you want to find out more, see **www.symantec.com/avcenter/venc/data/goodtime.html**

Craig Shergold's Card

Many hoaxes propagate because they sound sincere and because the recipient believes they are serious enough to forward to their mates, newsgroups, bulletin boards and so on. The most famous email of this type is not a hoax, but it's certainly one which is still mistakenly distributed. Craig Shergold became famous when he developed a brain tumour as a boy – back in early 1989. The cards on the hospital wall gave his doctor an idea – Craig should attempt to get in the Guinness Book of Records as the person receiving



CRAIG SHERGOLD FAQ Version 0.1beta

Contents © Arthur Goldstuck

Frequently Asked Questions about the Internet's most prevalent thought virus: the Craig Shergold appeal for get-well cards and/or business cards

Craig Shergold is seven years old and suffering from terminal cancer. It is his ambition to be included in the Guinness Book of Records for the largest number of business cards ever collected by one person. Craig would be grateful if you could send one of your business cards to the address below and also send the enclosed pages, including one of your own, to another ten companies. Obviously, speed is of the essence....

How old is Craig Shergold really? He's been seven for awfully long time.

Sixteen. He was born on June 24 1979. Call it a healthy afterlife, or call it urban legend. I know what I'm betting on.

Did Craig really appeal for get well cards to break the record?

This one's going to confuse the "Is-it-a-legend-yes-or-no" lobby all right. No, he didn't. He only found out about the appeal when the tally reached about 3000. THEN he agreed to the appeal. Even then, however, the official appeal was launched by the Royal Marsden Hospital.

Viruses which appeal to your sympathy are the hardest ones to spot

the most cards. A record already existed and this stood at just over one million. Various national newspapers such as *The Sun* were soon helping with Craig's cause and the cards started coming in.

The campaign was hugely successful. Not only did Craig get his wish and achieve a record, he also went to America for a life-saving operation. But the cards continued to come in – with some estimates putting the number of cards at more than 100 million. By 1991, the cards were still rolling in and Chris' family appealed for people to stop sending them. But as the number of cards appeared to be dropping, the message requesting the cards moved to the Internet. And it's been circulating there ever since. People may think they're doing some good by sending the message to 10 of their friends. But in practice, there's no need to forward the message because there's no sick boy any more. In fact, Craig has recently featured in several newspapers – in a new appeal for the messages to stop! See www.legends.org.za/arthur/craig01b.htm.

Bananas in pyjamas

There's nothing like a good medical warning to get the emails flowing. The Infected Bananas hoax arrives as an email warning that several shipments of Costa Rican bananas had been infected with necrotising fasciitis – flesh-eating bacteria! And if this didn't get the reader's attention, they are then told that the Costa Rican monkey population has been decimated.

The credibility bit comes next. There's a vague reference to scientists discovering that the bacteria was sticking to fruit skins. A reference to the FDA is made at the end of the message. The reader is then advised not to eat bananas for three weeks. Another vague time reference appears when the message suggests that anyone who has consumed bananas in the previous two or three days might

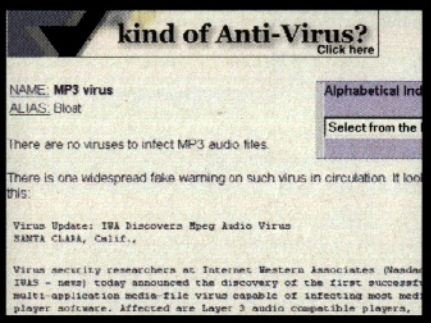
The Infected Bananas hoax obtained enough grisly descriptions to put you off bananas for life!

develop a skin infection and fever. These users are advised to seek medical attention – a giveaway bank of exclamation marks then appears.

As if things weren't bad enough, the reader is then advised that anyone with the condition will experience a lot of pain and will lose two to three centimetres of flesh per hour. Strange that the time period and surface area use the same numbering. Amputation then follows, with the possibility of death. Anyone living more than a mile from medical help is advised to burn good skin around the infected area – to stop the spread. Needless to say, the only thing that may arrive with your bananas is a tropical insect. See www.europe.f-secure.com/hoaxes/necroban.htm

Feeling bloated

The immense popularity of the MP3 format means it's a good candidate for a hoax. Of course, MP3 files are loaded, rather than executed. And such files are not normally modified by the user. Even so, launching this hoax in the form of a press release was enough to fool many users. It used technical terms and product names to good effect. It also used fake Nasdaq names – to the lay reader these appeared to be in the correct format. Obviously anyone with a detailed knowledge of the US stock market would have spotted this. But for most users, these references give the press release more credibility.



If the MP3 virus is making you feel dead and bloated, read all about it from www.europe.f-secure.com/hoaxes/mp3.htm

The document reveals that the Bloat virus infects all MP3 players that operate under Windows. And the infection is carried in MP3 files as they are passed around the Internet. Such a statement is a dream for the recording industry! The document is also laced with statements from the Internet age – such as "enterprise

WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT!

ONE OF THE MOST INVENTIVE SCAMS SO FAR

THE MOST INVENTIVE scam revolves around supposed transfers of money from Nigeria. This has been running for several years, both on and off the Internet. Either by letter or email, the recipient is advised that a large

quantity of money has to be removed from Nigeria. And their help is needed in looking after it! After an exchange of communications, an administration fee will normally be payable. The weeks may roll by and another administration fee may become due. The scam ends with the recipient being sent a box of black paper notes, with a special liquid to turn it back into money. Needless to say, the black paper does not turn into a hard currency!

Some people have been caught out by this scam and it was featured on ITV's consumer programme *We Can Work It Out*. It seems the perpetrator obtained address from the UK electoral register – easily accessible at www.192.com. Now it seems to have moved to the Internet, utilising email addresses from spam lists.

The most recent incarnation of the scam arrives in an email with a subject of 'Confidential Request for Assistance'. This purports to be from Prince A.J. Manga and is a request to help get $110 million out of Nigeria for 'safekeeping'. The recipient of the email is told "All I need from you is an assurance that you can handle this amount involved comfortably and that I can also trust you with this very arrangement." This scam looks like it will run and run. For more information, pop the words 'Nigeria hoax' into any of the major search engines. Or stop by www.superhighway.is/iis/index.html.

"Scams and hoaxes normally arrive as unsolicited email, perhaps from people you know"

Whole lotta hoaxing going on

HOW TO RECOGNISE A HOAX

1. There will be a requirement for you to forward the message to some or all of your friends.

2. The message will sound urgent – it must be forwarded before anyone else encounters the terrible incident the message is warning about.

3. It will appear to come from someone in authority, or a major name will be mentioned. A favourite phrase is "IBM verified the existence of this deadly virus."

4. It could be formatted strangely – perhaps with lots of exclamation marks or uppercase letters.

5. Whatever the warning is about, the consequences of experiencing this problem will sound fatal – "There is no known cure" or "It's far deadlier than the Love Bug" are two common terms.

6. The language of the message will probably be quite technical – and perhaps meaningless. The perpetrator of the Good Times hoax was clearly using a jargon generator when this line was being written – "The computer's processor will be placed in an nth-complexity infinite binary loop."

7. Although the warning may sound convincing, a quick analysis of the description will probably show either that the problem could not arise – or that the consequences described are ludicrous.

8. These messages normally have a hook – something to catch your attention. In the case of Craig Shergold, it's "A boy with a brain tumour."

9. There may be a threat or you may be made to feel guilty if you don't action the message.

10. There could be a request for help. Although everyone obviously gets genuine requests for help, why is someone you don't know contacting you for help?

WHEN SCAMS TURN NASTY

THE DAYS WHEN you could survive without anti-virus software are long gone. Even if you practice 'safe computing' techniques, vulnerabilities in your software can still let undesirable nasties through. For example, you might never open email attachments in Outlook. It doesn't matter, the Kak Worm is able to activate as soon as its email is read. This exploits an incorrect security marking on an Internet Explorer script.

Fortunately, plenty of security software is available. For PCs on a business network, running security software on the servers can prevent problems even reaching client PCs. All environments have a good choice of solutions, whether the servers are running Windows, NetWare, Linux or Unix. Individual PCs should still run their own software – to guard against local infected documents or disks. And this is especially important for PCs not covered by network security software. Threats can come from anywhere – but especially from Internet emails and file downloads. Numerous pay-for and free options are available to run on PCs. Here are some of the popular choices:

1. F-Secure Antivirus £106
www.f-secure.co.uk
Not the cheapest but a good product and excellent backing from a well-respected organisation.

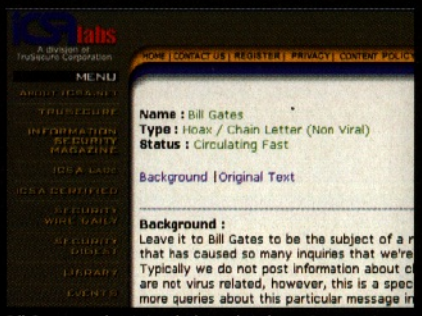
2. Inoculateit Personal Edition £free
www.Antivirus.cai.com
Binds itself into Windows for seamless operation. Easy to use but relatively slow.

3. McAfee Virusscan £25
www.mcafee.com
Cheap and functional package, also available in other McAfee utility suites.

4. Norton Antivirus £42
www.symantec.co.uk
Another comprehensive offering with a long heritage.

5. Sophos Antivirus £118
www.sophos.com
Expensive but a high security offering – you get what you pay for.

network security and management solutions". A lot of technical information on the workings of the supposed virus is also offered. Readers are told that it inserts one string of virus code immediately after the title/artist tag in an MP3 file. Only MP3 and EXE files are affected by Bloat. This hoax was able to fool a lot of people because of its presentation as a press release. The structure was good and much of the wording was believable. It also occurred at a time when the MP3 phenomenon was starting to take off. See **www.europe.f-secure.com/hoaxes/mp3.htm**



*Bill Gates was the victim of a hoax chain letter. See **www.icsa.net/html/communities/antivirus.hoaxes/billgtaes.shtml***

Open the gates

Write about a wealthy man, a product a lot of users are waiting for and combine it with the chance to make some easy money and you have another sure fire subject for a hoax. This starts with the recipient receiving a message talking about an email tracking program. Purporting to be from Bill Gates, the message publicises his new Microsoft software. The recipient's help is needed and they are asked to send the message to as many people as they can. Once the message has reached 1,000 users (not including duplicates), all people in the chain will win $1,000 and a copy of Windows 98.

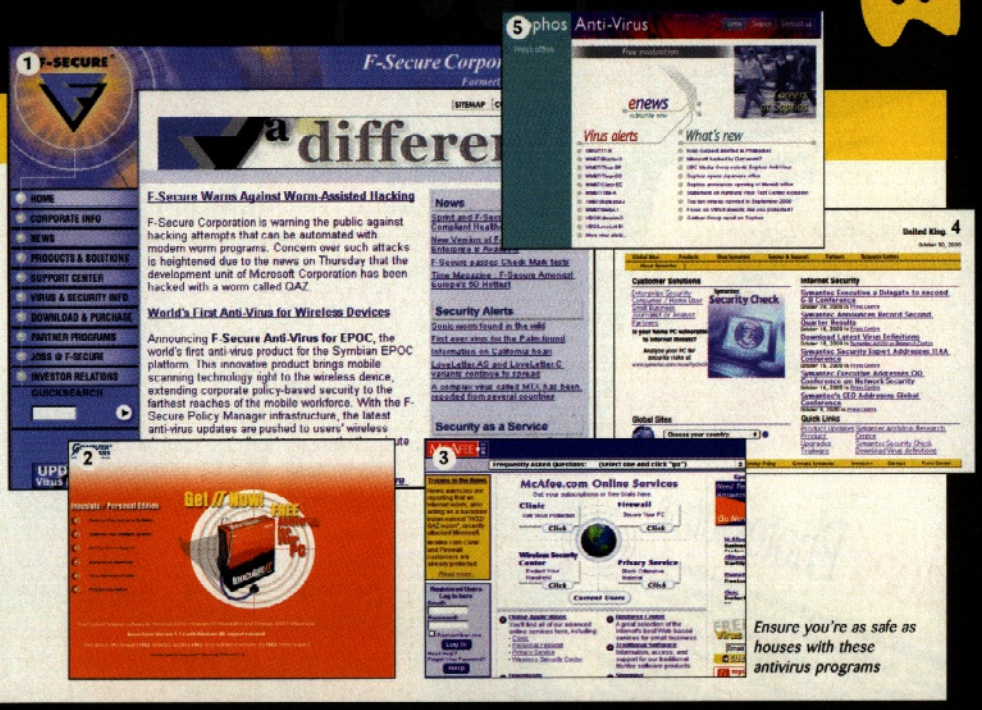
This is clearly a chain letter, but the familiar content adds some credibility. The message talks about IP addresses and how the new software uses these to trace the emails. Of course, anyone with a basic technical knowledge of the Internet will know that most IP addresses are allocated dynamically for a user session. It would be very difficult to trace emails using IP addresses alone. This didn't seem to matter to the thousands of people who contacted their anti-virus vendors. There was also a typing mistake in this message – something that can be seen in many hoaxes. Overall, it's easy to see why some people were taken in by this message, but it's one of those things that seems just too good to be true. See **www.icsa.net/html/communities/antivirus/hoaxes/billgates.shtml**

AO Hell

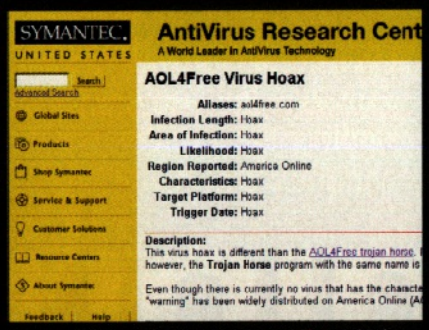
When you're the world's biggest online player, your users are likely to be tempted with offers of free access. The message headed 'AOL 4 Free' warns of another message in circulation. This supposedly tells the recipient they have won free access to AOL. But the reader is advised to delete the message because it contains a virus that will destroy the contents of their hard disk. Another variant of this asks for the message to be forward "to as many people as you can."

The variant also describes what happens when the 'virus' activates – "a window appeared and began to display my files that were being deleted. I immediately shut down my computer, but it was too late. This virus wiped me out." A clue about the false nature comes in the next sentence. This

"However savvy you think you are, it's still easy to be a hoax victim"



Ensure you're as safe as houses with these antivirus programs



Some pesky kids set up a hoax to mess with the minds of AOL members

advises that both F-Prot and the Windows 95 virus checker fail to find this supposed infection. There are two reasons why this would not appear in a genuine message. For starters, virus signatures are updated all the time. Secondly, Windows 95 was never supplied with a virus checker!

Unfortunately, another user decided to attach a trojan to a similar email. This really did cause damage – employing the Deltree command to trash whole directory structures. Of course, this had to be run by the user before any damage was done. The AOL 4 Free hoax fooled quite a few people, see www.symantec.com/avcenter/venc/data/aol4free.html

Who you gonna call?

Hoaxes and viruses are tricky. However savvy you may think you are, it's still easy to get caught out and find yourself the victim of an online hoax. But if you familiarise yourself with scams and hoaxes, you start to recognise the signs. However, if you are completely stuck, refer to our boxout on how to recognise an online scam or hoax. Alternatively if all this scamping about has appealed to your mischievous side, consult our box out on how to create a hoax. Just don't let anyone know you got the idea from us. ■

CREATE YOUR OWN HOAX!

TRY YOUR HAND AT CREATING YOUR OWN HOAX

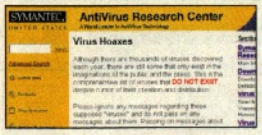
POP ALONG TO www.cao.com/hoax for a quick tutorial in creating your own Internet hoax. As it says, become famous and amaze your friends. You can choose between a 'Sob Story', 'Fear of God' and the 'End of the World'.

Go along to www.cao.com/hoax for a swift tutorial in making your own hoax

Choosing the first of these, we were offered a hoax with a subject of 'Urgent: Tibetan Monk with 3 Arms Needs a 4th for Bridge'. Seeing how easy it was, we crafted out own hoax:

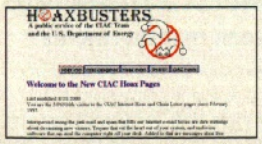
"Stop! Do not do anything else before you've read this message. According to the Institute for Applied Governmental Studies, the UK Government has issued 1,726 stealth taxes since it came to power in 1997. The Institute has now exclusively revealed that 134 new taxes will shortly be targeted at UK motorists – in order to eradicate their type from this land. UK motorists are therefore urged not to buy any petrol for the next six weeks – as a protest against this draconian regime. The lost tax revenue should hit the Government hard. Please pass this message on to all your friends, neighbours and colleagues – before motorists can no longer afford to leave home."

ONLINE RESOURCES

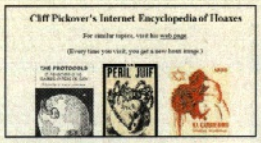


Symantec Virus Hoaxes
www.symantec.com/avcenter/hoax.html
Comprehensive reference on hoaxes - good one stop shop and tightly integrated with Symantec's anti-virus database.

McAfee Virus Hoaxes
http://vil.mcafee.com/hoax.asp
Lists the most common hoaxes in circulation and ties in nicely with the rest of the McAfee service.

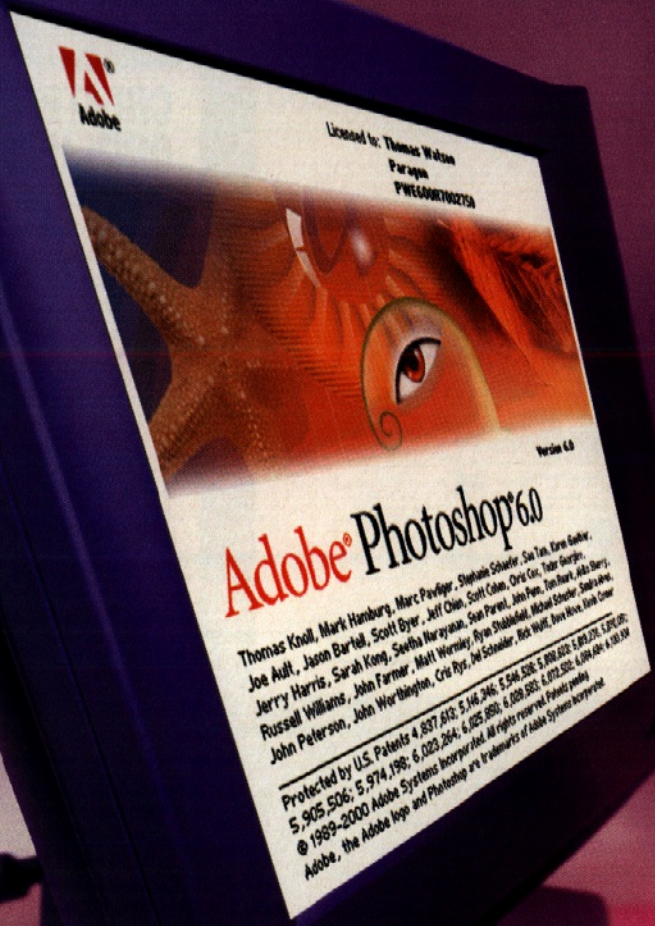


Hoaxbusters
http://hoaxbusters.ciac.org
US-based service providing useful background information on hoaxes, although it's not frequently updated.



Cliff Pickover's Internet Encyclopaedia of Hoaxes
www.pickover.com/hoax.html
Hundreds of links to information about hoaxes - all rated. Also covers other subjects such as hoax images of UFOs and aliens.

F-Secure Hoax Warnings
www.Europe.Datafellows.com/news/hoax.htm
Very comprehensive list of hoaxes, with the ability to show all hoaxes or just the ones in current circulation



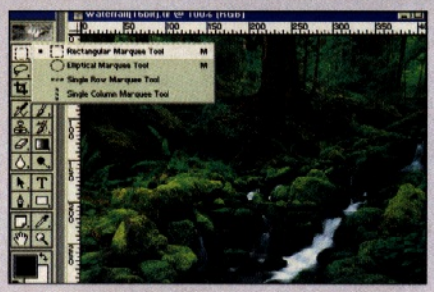
Practical internet
BEST BUY ★★★★★

Program: Photoshop 6
Company: Adobe
URL: www.adobe.co.uk
Type of program: Graphics package
File size: 127Mb
Cost: £449+VAT
Contact: 020 8606 4001

The biggest and best graphics package in the world has become even more powerful, with the release of Photoshop 6. **Thomas Watson** takes a look at the jewel in Adobe's crown

PHOTO FINISH

THE COOL NEW FEATURES OF PHOTOSHOP 6

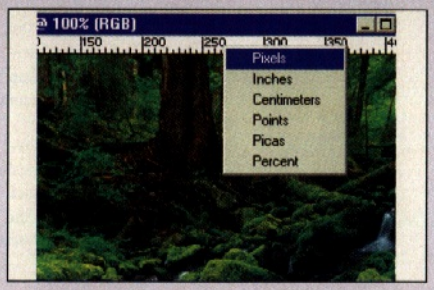


New look toolbar

The toolbar might look like the standard fayre that you've come to expect from Adobe recently, but when you click on any of the items with more than one option, you'll see that the pop-up menus have been tinkered with. Photoshop 6 now sports text descriptions.

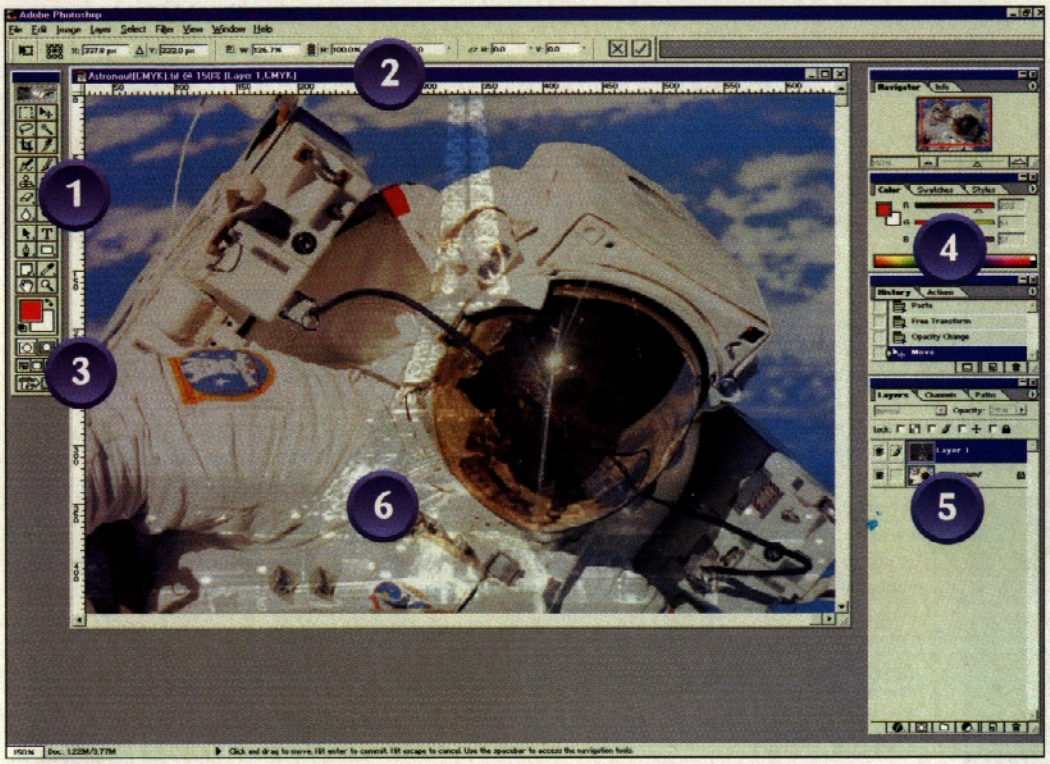
Context sensitive menu

Just below the main file menus a context sensitive menu, filled to the brim with options for you to play around with. This menu changes according to which tool you've selected, and provides you with all of the most common features you'd use for this tool.



Switch between measurements

If you prefer to work with the ruler option on, you might have noticed how time-consuming changing the measurement units was. Well, those worries are no longer relevant, for you can change from centimetres to pixels and so on by right clicking on the ruler itself.



1 The toolbar
The main difference in the toolbar is the menu items which stem from clicking on items within it.

2 Tool options
This menu is entirely context sensitive, in that it changes according to which tool you're working with.

3 ImageReady button
You can open the bundled Web graphics package ImageReady with this button on the toolbar.

4 Floating Palettes
Each of these palettes contain vital information and tools for you to tinker with your images.

5 Layer information
If you're working on a project that's tricky, you're going to have to use layers. With this palette, you can work your way around your layers.

6 The main screen
This is where the action really takes place. Here, you see your image, complete with any changes you've made to it.

Being the best is a tough burden to bare. Just ask the boys and girls at Adobe, whose Photoshop creation has been the leading graphics program on the market for a good while. The only problem is that people expect each release of the program to improve on the last, and will be ever so disappointed if it doesn't.

So when the mighty Photoshop 6 thudded on our doorstep, we expected great things. Apprehensively booting up the program for the first time, we were not to be let down. Weighing in with a huge number of tweaks, fiddles and updates, Photoshop 6 successfully reshapes the familiar mould, cramming in more than you might have thought possible.

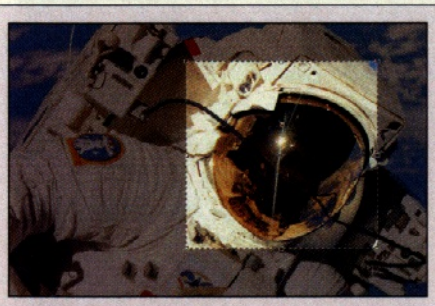
After the relative disappointment of 'is it a proper release or just a beta version?' Photoshop 5.5 last year, this latest showing features the most radical redesign of the familiar Photoshop interface for many a year. Devotees of the popular Adobe look needn't throw their hands to the skies in terror though, for you'll still be able to find your way about using your old skool skills. In fact, unless you're being deliberately obtuse, you should be able to manoeuvre your way around with much less hassle now.

See Adobe's Web site for details of how to buy Photoshop 6

So, where's the change then? Well, one of the most significant features of the interface tweak is the fandabydozy context sensitive tool options bar. Any option you select in the main toolbar will cause this to change, giving you a series of related choices. This works a treat in practice, and saves you a bucketload of time in the long run. The toolbar itself has been tweaked, so your buttons with multiple options are now treated to a lovely drop-down menu. Again, this might not sound like an earth-shattering improvement, but it's a nice little touch which shaves valuable time off your image editing sessions.

A slice of the action

Although the past few versions of Photoshop have been bundled with the ImageReady program for your added Web functions, this latest release sports helpful image slicing actions within the main ⇨



Advanced cropping

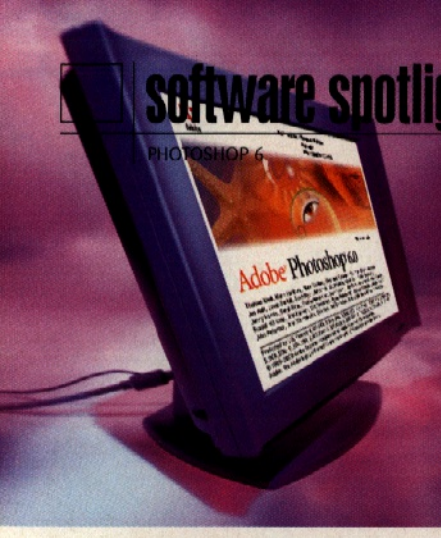
When you come to crop your image in Photoshop 6, you'll notice an excellent changes in the new version. After you've selected the area you wish to keep, the remainder which is to be discarded is greyed out. This makes cropping your pictures a whole lot easier.

Annotation tools

There are occasions when you're working on a graphic, and need to keep a note about a particular element. Photoshop 6 has a special Notes function for this. Like a Post-it note, you can write detachable notes, which can be transferred along with the file itself.

More text options

Text functions in Photoshop 6 have been redesigned, making it easier to enter your text into the program, and apply all manner of effects to it. Key to this is the way that you can now edit and manipulate text without having to bother with layers and the like.



"With a huge number of tweaks, fiddles and updates, Photoshop 6 successfully reshapes the familiar mould"

JARGON BUSTER

Layer
This allows you to pile many different elements and images on top of one another, so that you can build your image as a traditional artist might. Although most graphics programs offer this feature these days, Photoshop has long been recognised as providing the best options for tinkering with layers.

Crop
A simple way of discarding large parts of an image without having to use more time-consuming cut and paste options. Just select the part of the image you wish to keep, and the rest will disappear to the wind.

Image slice
This is the ability to split an image up into various sections, allowing you to specify actions and properties individually. Slicing is used for Web page design to use a single image as a navigation map, with different areas of the picture linking to different pages.

program itself. While this works just fine in practice, you get the impression that it's just the beginning – and that future versions of Photoshop will be much more Web-friendly all round. For now, though, be content with the ability to create your own navigation areas for Web pages without ever leaving the warm homestead of Photoshop.

Likewise, the inclusion of all kinds of rollover antics should ensure that your buttons and links are pretty as a picture. Needless to say, there's what is termed 'tight' integration with Adobe's supremely powerful Web creation software, GoLive 5. What this means is that you can save your buttons or nav bars in Photoshop or ImageReady as a single PSD file. When you come to open it in GoLive, you don't have to worry about all of the slicing files. Dare we suggest that this is an attempt to blow Macromedia clean out of the water, hoping to eliminate the need for the small-time designer to bother with Fireworks or similar products?

A little tinker

All your traditional vector image functions have been tinkered with, making the whole process of drawing a whole lot simpler. While you digital photographers who want a graphics program to tinker with your piccies won't exactly be jumping with joy at this news, the Adobe characters have also added a delightful vector text option. All of you who've wept at previous Photoshop let-downs on the textual editing front will finally be satisfied, we think. At last, text is fully editable, without having to convert it into a layer and do a whole range of fiddly and frankly uninteresting things first.

Traditionally, Photoshop has always been an awe-inspiring program, full of features and functions to allow punters to create stunning effects. Unfortunately, it's never been aimed at beginners, so your graphics virgins have always struggled to find their way about the interface. That's all changed though, with the redesign. We're particularly keen on the advanced crop function, which magically greys out the area of the picture you select to discard. Again, this might not have you jumping up and down in anticipation, but it's a lovely touch, which makes the whole process all the better.

All of the features of this huge program are now accessible to even the most innocent of new users with the expanded interface, but what about the problem of providing entry-level functions in the first place? Worry no more, for the Liquify command now does all of the warping effects seen in beginners packages the world over. All of these effects were available in the earlier releases of Photoshop, but this is the first time that they've been drawn together into an easy to use mini-program.

Is this the best graphics program we've ever seen? Well, yes, and by a long way. Even more features have been crammed into the Photoshop package than ever before, but everything has been made all the more simple and more user-friendly. Looks like Adobe will retain its position at the top of the tree for just a bit longer then. □

THE VERDICT

Features	★★★★★
Ease of use	★★★★★
Value	★★★☆☆
Overall	★★★★★

THE COOL NEW FEATURES OF PHOTOSHOP 6 CONT...

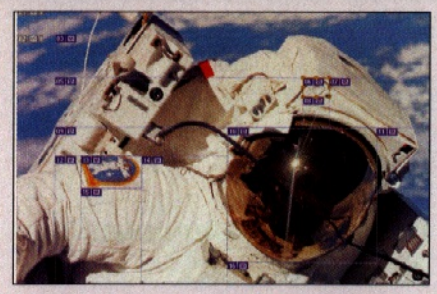
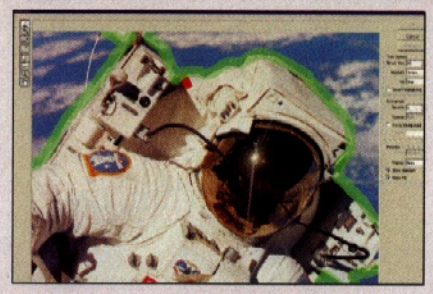


Image slicing

At long last, you can slice up your images ready for the Web in Photoshop. This is particularly useful for those of you wishing to have images acting as navigation sections on your site, and lets you split the image up into various rollover-ready parts.



The extracting function

First seen in Photoshop 5.5, the extract function is a handy and easy way to pluck parts of an image from the background, acting as a masking tool for those that don't want to get involved in complex paths and the like. It's been improved in Photoshop 6.

Liquify

Just in case you weren't convinced that Photoshop had been made simpler for the beginners out there, this brilliant command will sort you out. This section allows you to warp, twist and generally manipulate your images with more ease than you ever thought possible.

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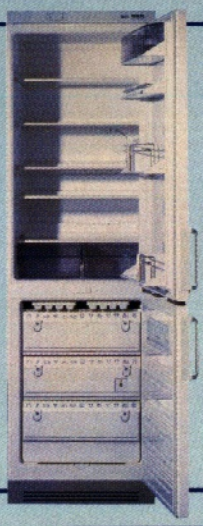

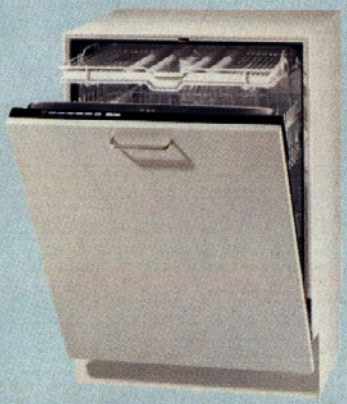

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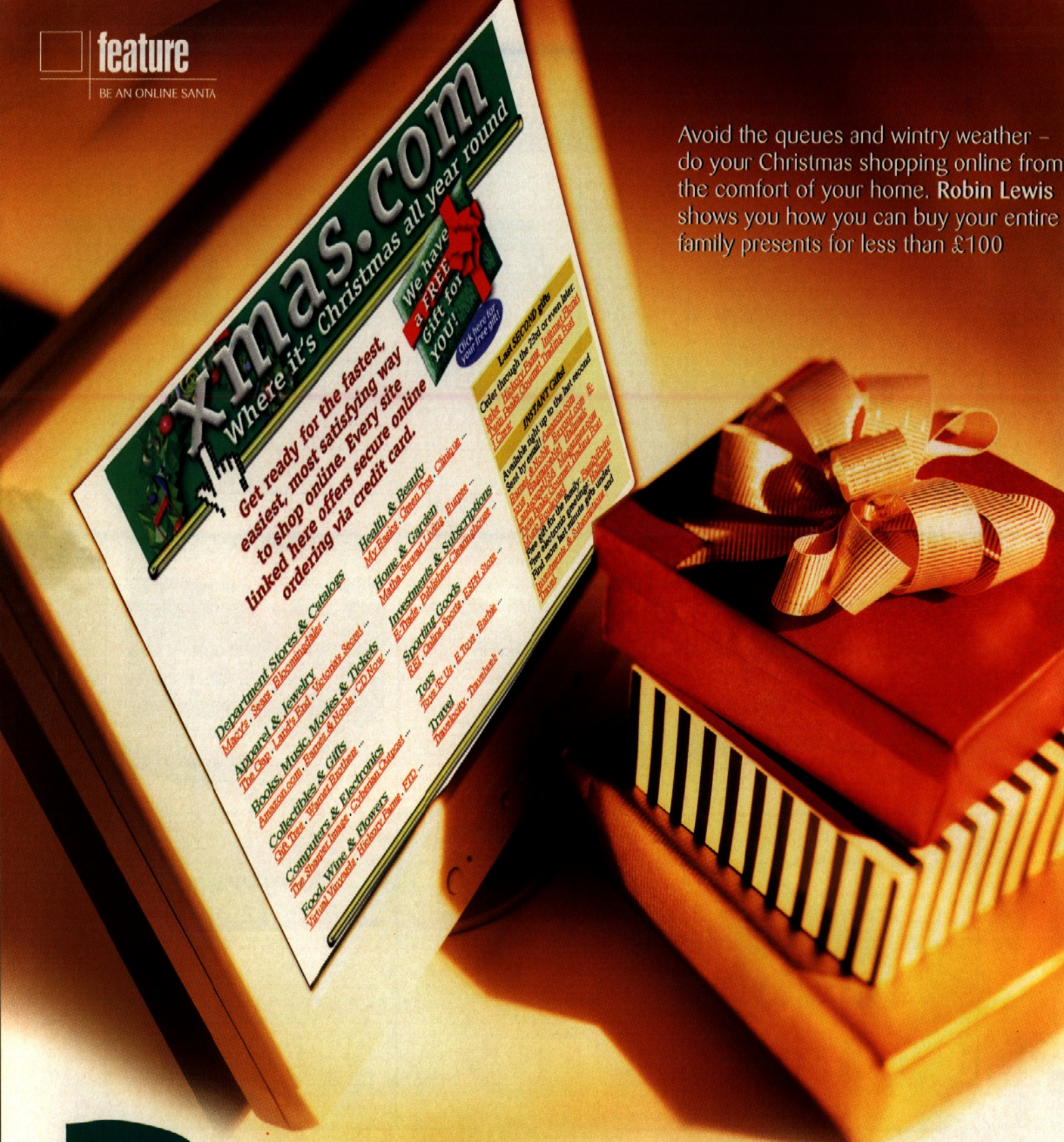
Avoid the queues and wintry weather – do your Christmas shopping online from the comfort of your home. **Robin Lewis** shows you how you can buy your entire family presents for less than £100



Become a online San

Buying Christmas presents can often be a less-than-enjoyable experience. All the fun of shopping is usually removed by money and time constraints, plus the hassle of getting something appropriate for everyone.

Online shopping can relieve much of this annoyance – there are no Christmas Eve queues, items are rarely out of stock and there's a huge choice available.

People who really enjoy shopping for Christmas presents have usually finished doing so by March and can approach the holidays with Zen-like calm. But most people just want to know is whether it can be done in time, how much it's going to cost and how long it's going to take.

We're going to show you how easy it is to buy Christmas presents for the whole family without having to leave your PC. Since money is very tight during the Christmas period, we're working to a budget. If you are feeling flush, however, just check out our Splash Out! box-out for those 'aspirational' presents you might just be able to afford. For our imaginary family, however, we're going to stick to less than £100.

We're also going to assume that you've left it until the last two weeks before Christmas (Monday, 11 December) or earlier. Not quite last minute, but some delivery times vary around the holiday period.

Shopsmart is an excellent place to start looking for those perfect gifts

If you want to send us a card for doing all this for you, feel free to drop us a line at the usual address – use one of the eCard sites in our box out.

If you want a further selection of useful sites try out the excellent Shopsmart (**www.shopsmart.com**), Shopsafe (**www.shopsafe.co.uk**) or Kelkoo (**www.kelkoo.com**). All the sites listed are secure, and in the cases of Kelkoo and Shopsmart you can also run price comparisons on certain items.

n
ta!

For him

For the man who has almost everything

IF HE'S A football fanatic, try the range of old-style soccer shirts available from The Old-Fashioned Football Company (**www.toffs.co.uk**). The shirts are £34.99 and are ace.

Presents for green-fingered lovers of Charlie Dimmock [He means gardeners – Ed] should check out the Garden Machinery site at **www.gardenmachinery.com**. The Outdoor Toys section is perhaps the most interesting part of the site, selling go-karts and other such frivolous items.

These *Simpsons* cufflinks – a good father/son gift – are just £10.00. hey feature both Bart and Homer and come from Presents Direct (**www.presentsdirect.com**). Even better from the same site – and sticking with the *Simpsons* – is this £76.00 chess set, with Marge as Queen, Homer as King, and Bart as the pawns. Aye, carumba!

These dolphin and seahorse radios from Initial Ideas (**www.initialideas.co.uk**) are great. They're a mere £14.99 each and are completely waterproof.

Film and TV Web site As Seen On Screen (**www.asseenonscreen.com**) has such delights as the big purple chair from Big Brother and the chess set from the *X-Men* movie - but better than that, it sells Robbie Williams' 'tiger' pants from his recent *Rock DJ* music video. Sadly, they're not the real pair that Williams whips off in the vid, but no-one will be able to tell the difference during a full monty impression at the Christmas party.

For her

For the woman who wants it all

WHAT YOU'RE BUYING For Her really depends on who She is – but you can't go far wrong with chocolates, and certainly not with Thorntons (**www.thorntons.co.uk**). ALternatively, go for flowers (**www.expressions.co.uk**).

For the more seductive gift, try Splendour (**www.splendour.com**). This Marakesh push-up bra caught our attention and at a mere £25.00 it's a head-turner. Another good underwear store for both men and women is BriefLook (**www.brieflook.co.uk**).

Christmas presents for Mum are usually a bit more difficult – get her something youthful and it might be inappropriate; get something for the house and home and it looks patronising. If you're looking for tactful ideas try out Martha Hill (**www.marthahill.com**). The site has an excellent collection of health and beauty products. There are even discounts for Internet shoppers.

Good beauty products are also available from Think Natural (**www.thinknatural.com**) and Beauty For Women (**www.beautyforwomen.co.uk**). Beauty For Women has put together some special packs of offers for much less than they would normally be available.

If it's fashion items you're after then there are big high street names now selling catalogue items on the Net – Next (**www.next.co.uk**) has a particularly good site, as does Kays (**www.kaysnet.com**).

For Kids

For big sisters and little brothers, or vice versa

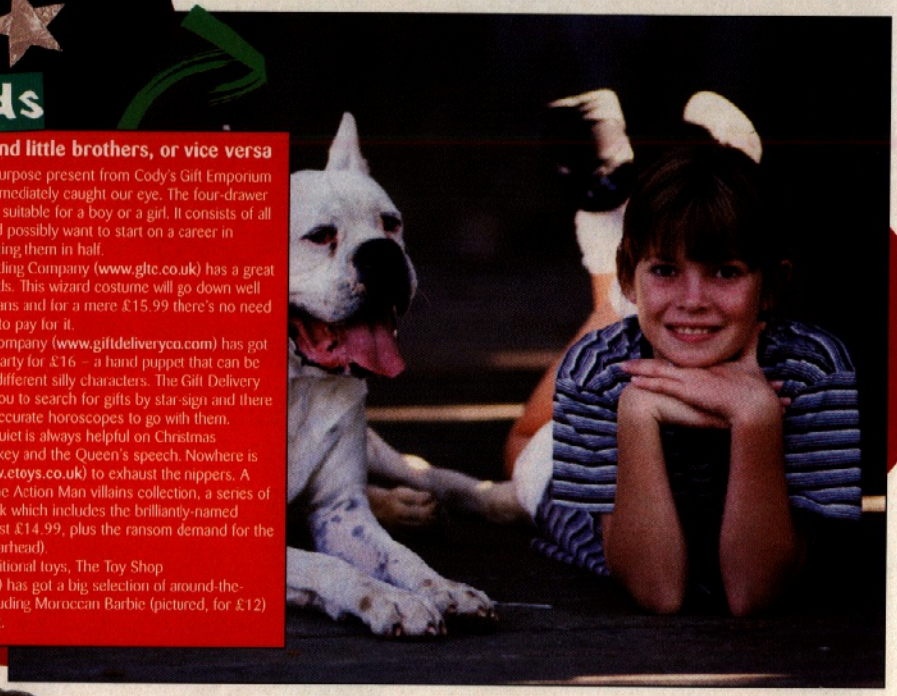
AN EXCELLENT ALL purpose present from Cody's Gift Emporium (**www.codys.co.uk**) immediately caught our eye. The four-drawer art chest for £12.00 is suitable for a boy or a girl. It consists of all the things a child could possibly want to start on a career in pickling sheep and cutting them in half.

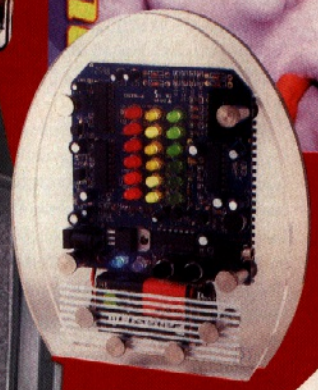
The Great Little Trading Company (**www.gltc.co.uk**) has a great selection of stuff for kids. This wizard costume will go down well with any Harry Potter fans and for a mere £15.99 there's no need to have a magic wallet to pay for it.

The Gift Delivery Company (**www.giftdeliveryco.com**) has got this excellent Morph Marty for £16 – a hand puppet that can be changed into loads of different silly characters. The Gift Delivery Company also allows you to search for gifts by star-sign and there are some remarkably accurate horoscopes to go with them.

Stuff to keep kids quiet is always helpful on Christmas afternoon following turkey and the Queen's speech. Nowhere is better than eToys (**www.etoys.co.uk**) to exhaust the nippers. A particular favourite is the Action Man villains collection, a series of dastardly pieces of work which includes the brilliantly-named Professor Gangrene (just £14.99, plus the ransom demand for the return of the nuclear warhead).

While we're on traditional toys, The Toy Shop (**www.thetoyshop.com**) has got a big selection of around-the-world Barbie dolls, including Moroccan Barbie (pictured, for £12) and a Barbie speedboat.





For Teenagers

For the little bundles of joy that are older

IF IT'S A BOY, congratulations. Try the William Tell crossbow from the newly-revamped I Want One Of Those site (**www.iwantoneofthose.com**). At a mere £26, its full-on sucker-action is excellent for letting off steam. Stick an apple on a small child's head and hours of fun can be had.The site also sells this Talking Bag which records voices (£15). We like leaving rude messages on it for people to find later, but then we're a bit juvenile like that.

If the teenager in question doesn't already have a mobile phone, they'd be well advised to get one from Mobiles From (**www.mobilesfrom.co.uk**). If they do, then a carefully-chosen but very funky selection of mobile covers from Go Bazaar (**www.gobazaar.co.uk**) for £14.99 should go down well. Go Bazaar always has savings off the RRP price – this Britney Spears poster, for instance is £6 in the shops but only £3.99 at the site.

For slightly bigger boys, Firebox (**www.firebox.com**) and Boy's Stuff (**www.boysstuff.co.uk**). Firebox is selling this Casio WQV-1 digital camera wrist-watch but it's in limited stock so you'll have to keep rechecking the site or join a waiting list to get hold of one. Boy's Stuff has this Truth Machine (basically a portable lie-detector) for £59 – a double-edged toy if ever there was one, and good to plant next to the radio or television when listening to Jeffrey Archer.

For Grandparents

For the elders and betters

Past Times Online (**www.pasttimes.com**) is a superb site for buying presents for the older generation. As well as retro Fifties and Sixties goods (A Vera Duckworth figurine, anyone?), there are high-class gifts from times past like this arched jewel clock (£45). With all orders over £40 you get a gold-plated filigree brooch – two presents for the price of one, in other words! For our budget though, this aromatherapy kit for £14.99 caught the eye.

Shopper's Universe (**www.shoppersuniverse.com**) is a massive site which should be on every e-shoppers bookmarks list. The Gift Time section features old-time models of places like Buckingham Palace and Big Ben for between about £20 and £50. They're beautifully-crafted works from well-known modellists Lilliput Lane and are real collector's items.

Other quirky and collectible gifts can often be picked up very cheaply at auction sites like QXL (**www.qxl.com**), eBay (**www.ebay.co.uk**), FiredUp (**www.firedup.com**) and Aucland (**www.aucland.co.uk**). We can't give prices or details on these because they change so quickly – but as we've said before the prices here will usually beat any shop – online or offline. Just read our online auction feature in *Practical Internet* 46 and you won't go wrong.

For Pets

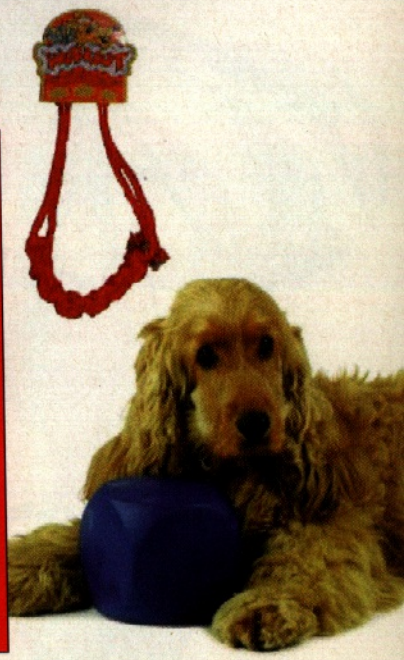
For your best friend

THE CHOICE FOR pet gifts has increased over the last six months. Animail (**www.animail.co.uk**) and Pet Planet (**www.petplanet.co.uk**) are still the two market leaders, but there's also Petspark (**www.petspark.co.uk**) and Bluepet (**www.bluepet.co.uk**) to look through.

Animail's yuppy fur cushion cat bed for just £13.99 is a bit decadent, but should keep Snuggles warm throughout the winter. For those farmers whose trousers are wearing a bit thin, Pet Planet's Climb N' Sail ferret boat for £16.99 should keep the little nippers amused.

Pets Pyjamas (**www.pets-pyjamas.co.uk**) sells this Busta Cube at £16.99. It's designed to hold food for your pooch – who'll spend hours trying to work out how to get to it, while you can eat Christmas dinner without those eyes looking at you.

For a little bit more (£24.50, to be exact) a Tanner and Dash hand-plaited leather collar from Bluepet will stop even the messiest Rover from looking ruff. Petspark for its part has got some good offers, including this "Rat Workout" bridge (£8.96), so you can have the most well-toned rat in town.It's a frightening prospect to have huge, beefed-up rats running around but there you go.

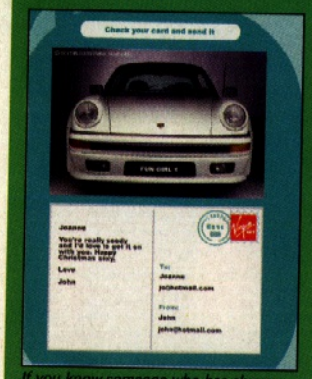


SEND YOUR CARDS ONLINE

THAT OTHER ANNOYING Christmas chore – sending cards – can also be sorted out online. Hypersnail (**www.hypersnail.co.uk**) is an excellent site – you can get your message written out by an in-house scribe or choose from several fonts for the inside. You can also choose the day that you want it to be sent.

If it's the thought that counts, Virgin.net (**www.virgin.net/cards**) has got a wonderful collection of thoughtful presents for your nearest and dearest. You can email Dad that Porsche he's always wanted – without having to spend a penny. Just send them online from Virgin's shopping site!

Also, see our tutorial on page 78 for details of how to send Christmas e-cards.



If you know someone who has always wanted a Porsche, send them this card

Extras

...and for everything else besides

EATING, DRINKING AND being merry is essential at Christmas. For eating, try this Gipsy hamper from Cleawater Hampers (**www.hamper.com**). We've also discovered the wonderful Shop Italy (**www.shopitaly.co.uk**), the home of everything Italian. Their food hampers are stuffed full of authentic cheeses, olives and pasta from the land of very small cups of coffee.

For a-boozin' and a-woozin', check out Last Orders (**www.lastorders.com**). The site really is a pleasure to shop at, with the widest choice anywhere. For the really masochistic, we can heartily recommend Mari Mayan's Absenta Absinthe, as described in *For Whom The Bell Tolls* by Ernest Hemingway as "tongue-numbing, brain warming, stomach warming, idea changing". Only £42.99 for all that.

Environmentally-friendly alcoholics can shop at Organics Direct (**www.organics-direct.co.uk**). If you're hosting over Christmas and need some ideas, go to The Party Store (**www.thepartystore.co.uk**) to stock up on balloons and sausages on sticks. It has chocolate-flavoured nipple spread, too (for those 'other' parties).

BALANCE THAT BUDGET

SO, WHAT'S THE FINAL VERDICT? DID WE MAKE IT OR DID WE FAKE IT? SEE FOR YOURSELVES...

- **For Him**
  Dolphin radio £14.99
  www.iwantoneofthose.com
- **For Her**
  Push-up bra £25.00
  www.splendour.com
- **For the Kids**
  Four-drawer art chest £12.00
  www.codys.co.uk
- **For Teenagers**
  Mobile phone covers £14.99
  www.gobazaar.co.uk
- **For Nan&Grandpa**
  Aromatherapy kit £14.99
  www.pasttimes.com
- **For Pets**
  Fur cushion cat bed £13.99
  www.animail.co.uk
- **Extras**
  Bottle of wine £2.99
  www.madaboutwine.com

TOTAL: £98.95

OR...
There is an alternative. Take that hundred pounds you were going to spend on gifts for everyone else, and buy this truly fantastic Scalextric track from Firebox (**www.firebox.com**) for £99.95 instead. That leaves you 5p for everything else.

Christmas. Who needs it?

Splash out!

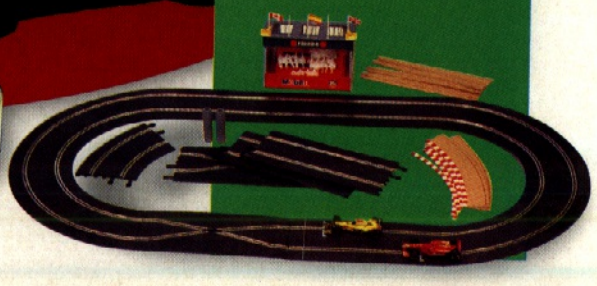
OF COURSE, BUYING presents at any time of the year is easy if you've got the cash, and we know some great places to start.

Posh Gifts (**www.poshgifts.com**) is as it sounds – crystal decanters, sterling silver money clips, driving gloves and leather briefcases. To be fair the items aren't that expensive, though you probably won't be doing all your Christmas shopping here.

Rather more ridiculously-priced are the items in the £no Limits section to I Want One Of Those. As well as a fighter jet, a millionaire's catamaran and this retro-jukebox, there's also an 18-carat gold-plated mouse from award-winning jewellers McCabe McCarthy, (only) £376.

For the incurably romantic with deep pockets Cool Diamonds (**www.cooldiamonds.com**) has got jewellery from £90 and you can have many of them completely custom-made. Prices are up to 40 per cent less than high street prices, which should make that £500,000 diamond seem much more affordable.

For games fans, it looks like the PlayStation 2 won't be available in time for Christmas. It may be, though, so preorder from **www.kelkoo.com**.



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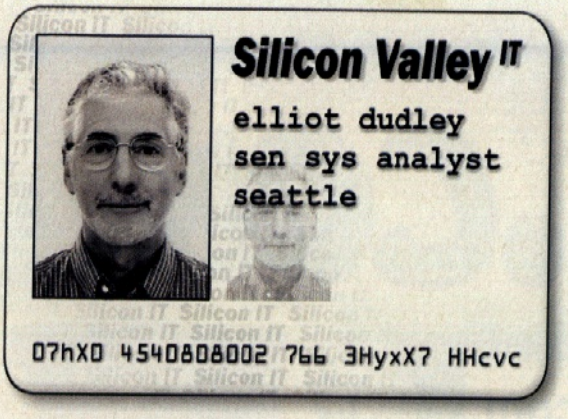

Seattle USA. Friday, 20th October 2000. 08:15 PST.

elliot goes to register his first and last name
only to discover that elliotdudley.com
has been registered by somebody
who has already recognised
the benefits of owning
his own personal
domain name

register your domain name now
before your namesake does

elliotdudley.com

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lego@elliotdudley.com

mummy@elliotdudley.com

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WebFusion®
Seriously Easy Web Hosting®

WIN! A WEB SERVER WORTH £10,000

ENTER NOW FOR FREE!

Win a Cobalt RaQ4 128 dedicated Web server free – worth over £10,000*

If you're a Net entrepreneur, a reseller or simply a Web designer who wants full control over a Web site, getting your own dedicated Web server is a sensible idea. You won't be bogged down with any of the technicalities of running or launching the site. With an RaQ 4 server from WebFusion and a Web-based control panel, operating your site is a doddle.

Earlier this year, Cobalt Networks Inc presented WebFusion with the award 'Service Provider of the Year 2000 in Europe, Middle East and Africa'. As part of WebFusion's celebrations, it has teamed up with *Practical Internet* to give away an RaQ4 128 server to one lucky reader. It will be housed in WebFusion's multi-million pound data centre absolutely free for life!

WebFusion has the highest level of partner accreditation from Cobalt True Blue Diamond Partnership. Customers benefit from a dedicated technical support team via telephone and email, which comes from highly trained technical staff.

This ensures that the support it gives you is of the highest standard possible. It also has plenty of advanced sales literature on-hand to answer all your enquiries.

The RaQ 4 server is the perfect solution for small and medium sized companies – in particular Web designers and entrepreneurs who are new to the Net but wish to maintain control of their site via a Web-based control panel. The server is easy to control with no jargon or systems know-how needed.

** Figure based on a 10 year account*

WHAT YOU CAN WIN

RaQ4 128 server with:

- 128Mb memory
- 15.2Gb hard disk
- 5Gb bandwidth per month*
- Fully secure data centre environment
- Dedicated Servers service level agreement – guaranteed!
- Web-based administrator

**Extra bandwidth over the monthly allowance will incur additional costs*

RUNNERS-UP PRIZES

There are also 20 free .co.uk domain names up for grabs for the lucky runners up!

The domain name package includes:

- Registering your choice of a .co.uk domain name
- Email forwarding
- Web forwarding
- Full domain control
- Holding page wizard
- Up to 100 email forwarding addresses
- Change IPS tags

HOW TO ENTER...

Email your answer to the question below to **pi@paragon.co.uk** with the heading 'Web server competition' or send it on a postcard to: Web server Competition, *Practical Internet*, Paragon Publishing, Paragon House, St Peter's Road, Bournemouth, BH1 2JS to reach us no later than 14 December 2000. Please include your name, address and daytime telephone number.

Web server competition entry form

1) **The Cobalt RaQ 4 128 has a hard disk of 15.2Gb**
A) True
B) False
C) Neither

2) **WebFusion holds which Cobalt accreditation?**
A) True Blue Sapphire
B) True Blue Diamond
C) True Blue Quartz

Name.....
Address.....
.....
.....
.....Postcode.....
Daytime phone.....
Email.....

Rules: Employees of Paragon Publishing Ltd, WebFusion, Cobalt, their agents, wholesalers or retailers and/or relations may not participate. Participants must be over 18 years of age and resident in the United Kingdom. The judge's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. There is no cash alternative to any prize offered. Proof of postage cannot be accepted as proof of delivery and no responsibility can be accepted for lost, delayed or damaged entries. Photocopied or altered entries will be disqualified. The closing date for this competition is 14 December, 2000.

Inspiration!

Bored with the static look of your Web site? **Mark Newman** and **Thomas Watson** go in search of the 12 best ways to transform it

If you already have your own Web site or are building one for the first time using the book with this issue, you'll be the proud owner of a handsome set of Web pages. But stand back for a moment and compare your site to others which cover the same topic and the Web's most successful sites like BBC Online (**www.bbc.co.uk**) and Football 365 (**www.football365.co.uk**).

You'll notice the most popular areas of the sites are those boasting interactive features like messageboards, chat rooms and live polls. So why haven't you got some of these nifty gadgets on your site?

If you think they're too tricky to create or will involve hours of time-consuming work, think again. They're surprisingly easy to add to your site and require little or no technical knowledge. Best of all, they're all free!

We've compiled a rundown of the 12 best gadgets for your site – explaining how you can add everything from polls and messageboards to news tickers and personalised postcards to your site.

Over the next few pages we'll show you how to add them to your site, and will also explain the pros and cons and tell you just how easy – or not – they are to add to your site.

In no time your site will be transformed into an interactive, eye-catching set of Web pages that visitors will want to keep returning to. Read on... □

1. POLLS

LET YOUR SITE'S VISITORS VOTE ON TOPICAL ISSUES

AN EXCELLENT WAY to get your site's visitors actively involved in the content of your site is to give them an opinion poll so they can vote on topical issues. If they can see how other people are voting it's not only interesting but also helps them to feel at home with your site if there are other like-minded Web users using it.

You will need to change the poll topic frequently to maintain interest – but since polls are dead simple to set up and add to your site, this should be no problem.

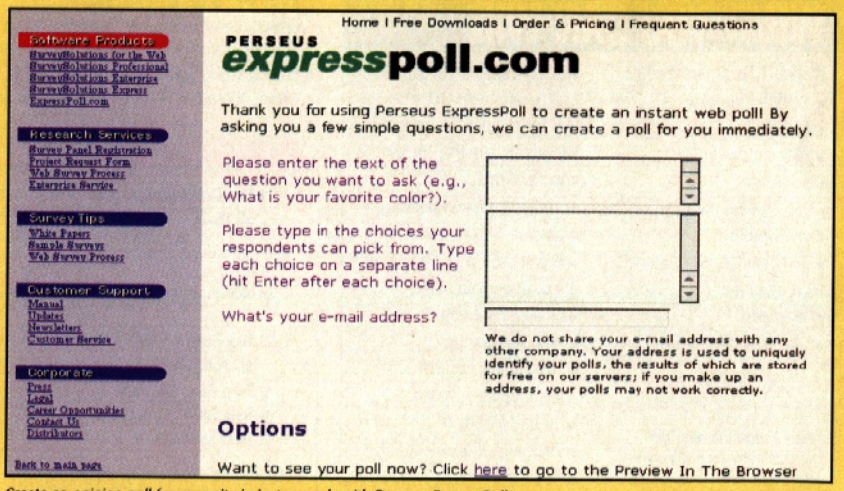
One of the best services is Perseus ExpressPoll (**www.perseus.com/softwareprod/express_poll.html**) which automatically creates the HTML code for you to drop onto your Web page and, uniquely, lets you kill the advertising banners that are so often forced upon you with other free services. Among the other polling sites to consider are PollNow (**www.pollnow.com**), Visitor Poll (**www.visitorpoll.com**) and EZPolls (**www.ezpolls.com**) which also don't require programming or scripting on your part since the polls are based on their server and linked to from your page. Take note, though, that advertising is displayed with them.

Overall, polls are very easy to add to your pages and are a great way of making your site's visitors feel they have a say in the content of your site.

THE VERDICT

How flashy does it look?	★★★★☆
Use to site visitors?	★★★★☆
How easy is it to add?	★★★★★

Best service
www.perseus.com/softwareprod/express_poll.html



Create an opinion poll for your site in just seconds with Perseus ExpressPoll

2. NEWS FEEDS

ADD REGULARLY UPDATED NEWS STORIES TO YOUR SITE

ENSURING THE CONTENT on your Web pages is always fresh and regularly updated is vital if you want people to keep returning to your site. Although most site designers can't afford the time (or money) to do updates throughout the day, this doesn't mean you can't have regularly updated content on your site.

Sign up to a syndicated news service to add live news feeds to your site for free. You can, for instance, add news, sports and entertainment stories from the *Guardian* newspaper on your site at **www.guardianunlimited.co.uk/distribution**.

Choose from Moreover's 322 news feeds for constantly updated content for your site

Rather than signing up to one individual service, it's best to join an affiliate site such as iSyndicate (**http://uk.isyndicate.com**) or Moreover (**www.moreover.com**). Such services offer a wide choice of news, photos, weather forecasts, horoscopes and more from thousands of sources.

Most of the content is free – and it is all very easily integrated on your Web pages by simply copying and pasting some HTML code. You may find it fiddly, however, to setup which content you want on your page. You'll also need to insert a small logo or advertising banner onto your page – but these are minor inconveniences in order to get your hands on such valuable content.

Whatever subject your site is based on, there's certain to be a related newsfeed out there. Get one today – your site's visitors will be impressed and will be entertained or informed at the same time.

THE VERDICT

How flashy does it look?	★★★★★
Use to site visitors?	★★★★★
How easy is it to add?	★★★★★

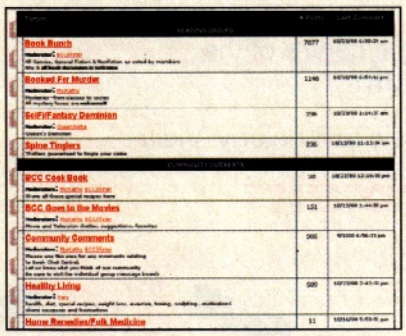
Best service
www.moreover.com

3. MESSAGEBOARDS

LET YOUR VISITORS LEAVE MESSAGES FOR ONE ANOTHER

A MESSAGEBOARD – a Web page where visitors can leave a message – is a highly effective way of getting people coming back to your site. They allow several different conversations or topics to be discussed at once – and if they become active and controversial they will rapidly become of the most used areas of your site.

You can sign up for free messageboard services at EZBoard (**www.ezboard.com**), FreeBoards (**www.fboards.com**) and GuestWorld (**http://guestworld.tripod.lycos.com**) but you will be required to display an ad on your messageboard. That's the price you pay for using a free service.



Create a great looking messageboard like this for your site with EZBoard

If you don't mind paying for your messageboard – and want the best service available plus complete control over the board's appearance – then the Ultimate Bulletin Board from Infopop (**www.infopop.com**) is a good choice. Be warned, though, that it costs $199 (about £140) and does require you to have CGI access and Perl 5 support. It's great for advanced users but not recommended for beginners.

One final point when installing your messageboard: always read the terms and conditions. Some services are offered only to non-commercial sites while others prohibit certain types of chat.

THE VERDICT

How flashy does it look?	★★★★☆
Use to site visitors?	★★★★★
How easy is it to add?	★★★★☆

Best service
www.ezboard.com

WEB GRAPHICS

ADD SOME EYE-CATCHING IMAGES TO YOUR WEB PAGES

www.clipartconnection.com

More clipart goodies to spice up your Web site than you could possibly hope to use. Well worth a visit for the graphically-challenged.

www.designheaven.com/GraphicsRing

Boasting a massive 783 sites in its ring (oh, matron), this collection of graphics goodies sites will thrust more graphical joy at you than even Sir Harry Secombe could take.

www.freeclip-art.net

One of the nicest clip art sites on the go, searching does indeed end here. Millions of goodies, pictures and all-round quality items for your perusal.

www.animation-central.com

If bogstandard pictures bore you quicker than a rambling ghost story from your work colleague, get down to here for some quality GIF action.

www.prodraw.net

Being selfish and greedy punters, we were quickly bored with standard piccies, and were only pleased by the beauty and poise of the 3D stuff at prodraw.

Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line

ADSL

The World Wide Wait is over...

the internet is about to get **faster**

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4. CHAT ROOMS

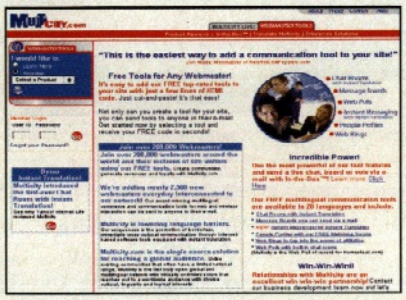
INTRODUCE YOUR SITE'S VISITORS TO THE ART OF CONVERSATION

GET GABBIN' WITH your site's visitors by introducing a text-based chat room. A chat room can be very useful in boosting the popularity of your site. Like-minded people with similar interests can converse about whatever they fancy.

Since most services only require you to add a few lines of HTML code to activate them on your site, they are a doddle to setup. Among the services to consider are Parachat (**www.parachat.com**) and MultiCity (**www.multicity.com/webmasters**) which are both Java-based and are easy to configure.

QuickChat (**www.quickchat.org**) is slightly different since it uses IRC technology through your Web browser while BeSeen (**www.beseen.com**) offers a whole heap of free chatting services that are very simple to setup.

Although a chat room is a great addition to your site take note that unless you're online 24 hours a day, it's sensible to have specific chat times when you are guaranteed to be active in the room. You don't want to put visitors off by getting them to visit eerily empty rooms where no-one is there to talk!



Add live chat to your site with MultiCity's easily configurable service

THE VERDICT

How flashy does it look?	★★★★☆
Use to site visitors?	★★★★★
How easy is it to add?	★★★★☆

Best service
www.multicity.com/webmasters

5. COUNTERS

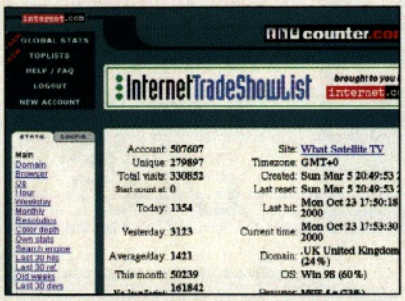
FIND OUT WHO'S VISITING YOUR SITE AND WHERE THEY COME FROM

HOW MANY VISITORS do you get to your site? And what Web pages are referring the most visitors to your site? It's all valuable information that will give you an idea of the popularity of your site and the success of certain pages.

Adding a counter to your site is one of the most important things you can do. Visit TheCounter.Com (**www.thecounter.com**) for the best counter service on the Web – it's fully configurable, totally free, doesn't require any ads to be placed on your site and, best of all, can be invisibly inserted on your Web pages so no-one knows it's there!

Other decent counter services include FastCounter from LinkExchange (**www.linkexchange.com**), HitMatic (**www.hitmatic.com**) and Digiweb (**www.http://counter.digiweb.com**).

While a counter won't be of any immediate use to your site's visitors, the information that you glean from it will let you tailor the content of your site to better meet visitors' likes and dislikes in the long run – hence it's very useful. In fact, it's essential. If you haven't got one yet, get one right away.



Is your site being deluged with hits? Find out with the help of TheCounter.Com

THE VERDICT

How flashy does it look?	★★★★★
Use to site visitors?	★★★★☆
How easy is it to add?	★★★★★

Best service
www.thecounter.com

6. ADD RADIO

CREATE YOUR OWN RADIO STATION

IF YOUR SITE IS music-related then why don't you consider launching your very own online radio station which listeners can access from your Web site? It's a facility that many Web site designers don't consider – even though it's surprisingly easy and quick to setup.

Radio Sonicnet (**http://radio.sonicnet.com**) lets you create a station that plays only the music you want to hear using a unique ratings system where you rank artists according to your tastes. Those with a low ranking are rarely played, while those with higher rankings play more frequently.

Launch your own Web site radio station with the help of Radio SonicNet

Once you've configured the content of your station, you're supplied with two lines of HTML code which, when added to a page of your site, creates a button that when pressed opens a new window where your music begins playing.

Alternatively, if you don't mind downloading some software, try launching your radio station with the aid of MyCaster (**www.mycaster.com**) which even lets you become a DJ and add your own silly banter! Your site's visitors are far more likely to remember your music site if you've taken the time to start your own radio station. They like to be pampered – and, hey, who knows, you could become a star!

Look for more on this in next month's issue.

THE VERDICT

How flashy does it look?	★★★★★
Use to site visitors?	★★★★★
How easy is it to add?	★★★★★

Best service
http://radio.sonicnet.com

NEED MORE HELP IN SITE BUILDING?

www.htmlgoodies.com
Featuring a zany cartoon of Joe Burns, this site lives up to its name by giving you the inside info on all kinds of HTML malarkey.

www.mycomputer.com
Myriad collections of gadgetry, goodies and general goodness. A few trips here could sort out your site big time, such is the high level of goodieness here.

www.zy.com
Billed as being the quick and easy way to add all sorts of items to your Web site, zy.com can have you java-ed up in no time at all.

www.javascriptsource.com
With a simply whopping 643 scripts on the go, even the meanest of Java plunderers will be more than satisfied with their haul here.

www.thefreesite.com
The place to be for all the best in free things for your Web site. Stop listening to us ranting and raving about it, and just go there now.

ed says

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inc VAT

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Dixons on-line price
£269.99 inc VAT
(27/09/00)
empiredirect price
£199.99
inc VAT

Sanyo SCX100 Vacuum Cleaner
Comet on-line price
£127.95 inc VAT
(27/09/00)
empiredirect price
£99.99
inc VAT

***JVC AV32WFT1 32" Widescreen TV**
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(27/09/00)
empiredirect price
£749.99
inc VAT

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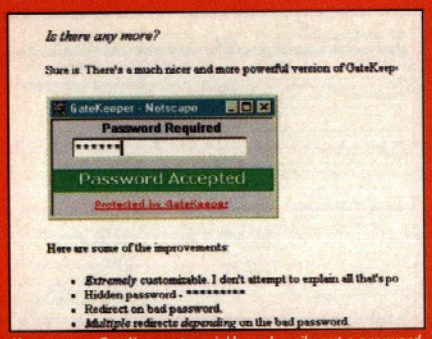
TVS | VIDEOS | HI-FIS | CAMCORDERS | DVD PLAYERS | WASHERS | DRYERS | FRIDGES | FREEZERS | COOKERS | VACUUMS

Inspiration!

7. PASSWORDS

PREVENT ACCESS TO SOME PAGES

IF YOU'VE GOT any information on your site that you don't want the entire world and his brother to see, protecting certain pages with a password is an ideal solution. Apart from the fact that you can decided just who is allowed access to these pages, there's the bonus that punters will have an added sense of being involved if they're part of your elite crew. It's not inconceivable either that asking your visitors to make the effort to sign up will make them feel that they have to visit over and over again, just to make the effort worthwhile.



You can use GateKeeper to quickly and easily put a password on your site

Less scrupulous Web gurus out there can even turn passwords into money. Promise visitors untold riches on crossing the barrier, and you can charge people to join your site, which in turn gives them that all important password.

Beware, though, for password action on your site involves more than just a smattering of JavaScript knowledge. Even one of your high-level WYSIWYG editors won't help you, so you'll undoubtedly find yourself turning to the Java demon time and again. Many smaller sites will ask for the password in a pop-up screen.

One of the best examples of password protection is on the Hotmail.com site, where visitors obviously have to sign in and enter their password before being allowed to view what could be very private email messages.

THE VERDICT

How flashy does it look?	★★★★★
Use to site visitors?	★★★★★
How easy is it to add?	★★★★★

Best service
www.pagetutor.com/keeper

8. MAKE YOUR SITE SEARCHABLE

HELP PUNTERS FIND JUST WHAT THEY WANT ON YOUR SITE

CHANCES ARE THAT if you've got a massive sprawling site filled to the brim with quality items, your punters will appreciate a handy search engine. This saves your average visitor having to spend valuable minutes of their hard-earned leisure time looking for things. With a search engine in place on your site, they only have to type in their key word, and are instantly provided with a list of pages.

You can keep your site's visitors as happy as Larry if you give them a search facility. Try PicoSearch for size

The best search engine site we've clapped our eyes on is the PicoSearch facility, available on **www.picosearch.com**. Signing up for the free version of the members' package is a doddle, and doesn't fill your search section with a plethora of gratuitous and unpleasant ads. Except for your standard PicoSearch small ad, visitors would be none the wiser as to your cheapo pretensions.

Adding the search facility to your Web site won't call upon your genius-like brain much either. All you need to do is drop the ubiquitous snippet of HMTL into your page source. Punters will now have the opportunity to search through your site, finding just what they want with the minimum of fuss.

THE VERDICT

How flashy does it look?	★★★★☆
Use to site visitors?	★★★★★
How easy is it to add?	★★★★☆

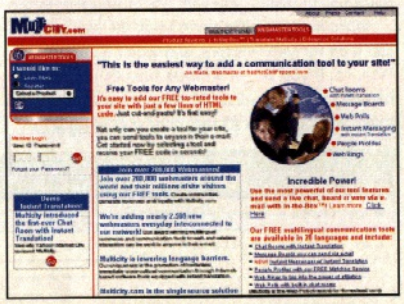
Best service
www.picosearch.com

9. RANDOMLY ROTATING CONTENT

SAVE YOURSELF A LOAD OF EFFORT WITH THIS HANDY EFFECT

PEOPLE WILL ONLY visit your site time and time again if there's something different to look forward to. The problem with this is that it can take ages to update your pages on a regular basis, and going to extremes just to make your home page look different every day will cause you more hassle than it's worth.

With randomly rotating content, however, you can bring up a different image or piece of text each time that one of your lucky visitors comes onto your site. With just a few lines of JavaScript, you can guarantee that your site has a fresh feel every time. This works especially well if you're the proud owner of a fan site or the like, where you can entertain frequent visitors to a series of changing images or facts on your hero.



Add live chat to your site with MultiCity's easily configurable service

Some more speedy browsers out there might be a tad miffed about the extra delays in waiting for your pages to download, but most visitors will be more than happy with this. Just pop down to either **www.javascriptsource.com** for examples of the Java version of this feature, or **www.worldwidemart.com/scripts** for Perl goodies.

THE VERDICT

How flashy does it look?	★★★★☆
Use to site visitors?	★★★☆☆
How easy is it to add?	★★★☆☆

Best service
www.javascriptsource.com

SITE GADGET DO'S AND DON'TS

Make sure you do...

- Keep your site in tip top shape with the latest gadgets. This will help to bring punters back time and again – if you can persuade your visitors that you're on top of the technology, you're halfway there already.
- Have a think about what your visitors would like to see.

Make sure you don't...

- Don't have too many flipping banner ads on your page. We don't care how much money it makes you – it'll only annoy people who visit your site.
- Don't expect to be able to rest on your laurels for too long. Even something quality like a postcard section to the site will quickly become boring to your visitors if you don't bother to update the pictures and messages regularly.
- Don't make stuff too complicated, or expect anyone to understand anything.

Inspiration!

10. ONLINE POSTCARDS

ALLOW VISITORS TO SEND THEIR VERY OWN PERSONALISED POSTCARDS

AN IDEAL WAY of ensuring that visitors remember your site is to include a postcard-creation section. They can choose from any one of several pictures that you decide to make available to them, add their own message at will, and send it off by email to their lucky mates. The fun is all theirs, and you've not spent too much time and effort setting the whole affair up. What's more, you can embed a link to your site in the postcard itself, so everyone that receives a postcard also receives an advert to your Web site. Bonus.

There's a really good postcard package at **www.mypostcardsite.com**, where you can create your own free postcard site easily. What's more, it doesn't require all CGI stuff from you, and instead you can sort the whole enchilada out with your common or garden HTML. The only problem we found was that the postcards we sent on the on-site demonstration seemed to vanish into the ether. Apart from that, though, your outlay of no money will mean only the expected banner ads scattered around your page.

Add a touch of the seaside to your site by including a postcard service

THE VERDICT

How flashy does it look?	★★★★☆
Use to site visitors?	★★★★☆
How easy is it to add?	★★★★☆

Best service
www.mypostcardsite.com

11. AFFILIATE SCHEMES

MAKE MONEY FROM FROM YOUR SITE BY SIMPLY ADDING LINKS

PROBABLY THE EASIEST route to bolstering your site, and making a bit of money at the same time, is to join up to an affiliate scheme. This basically involves you tagging along with one of the big guys, redirecting people to their site, and earning yourself some easy dosh in the process.

There are various ways of working the affiliate game. One of the biggest boys to hang around with in the playground is QXL.com, which pays you 10p for every punter who visits their site using a link from yours. Most other companies expect a bit more from you before they'll shell out, though. BlackStar (**www.blackstar.co.uk**) and Amazon (**www.amazon.co.uk**) are good examples, where you earn a percentage of purchases from people referred from your site. The added bonus, though, is that BlackStar furnishes you with 5% of future buys too.

While it sounds like great news for you, what good can it do for your visitors, and won't it look obvious? Well, no. If you've got a music site, it's perfectly natural to link to online CD retailers, and in fact will make your site look all the more professional.

*BlackStar is a very good business to become affiliated with – visit **www.blackstar.co.uk** for a piece of the action*

THE VERDICT

How flashy does it look?	★★★★☆
Use to site visitors?	★★★★★
How easy is it to add?	★★★★★

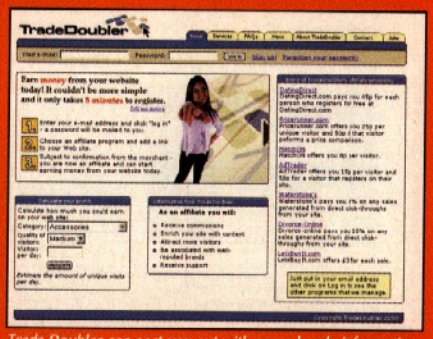
Best service
www.blackstar.co.uk

12. BANNER ADS

ENTER THE WORLD OF ONLINE ADS

LET'S FACE IT – there are virtually no sites kicking around on the Web that don't feature a whole collection of seemingly gratuitous banner advertisements. Whatever you might think, this is where all the money that funds the Web comes from, so you're going to have to put up with it.

But why should you just put up with it? Why not embrace this mercenary ideal, and turn your site into a money-making extravaganza? Virtually all of the goodies that we've talked about on these pages will fill your pages with the occasional advert, so you'll already have embraced the whole field without even knowing it.



Trade Doubler can sort you out with some handy information on making money from the Net

If you're looking to make some sneaky money, **www.refer-it.com** or **www.tradedoubler.com** are the places to go. Here, you'll find all manner of information related to making money from unsuspecting members of the Net public. Again the whole premise of the thing is that you link to someone else's site from your own, and get paid for the privilege. It's always worth remembering that the average ISP will place banner ads throughout your site anyway, so making tons of money from more and more ads might be good for you in the short-term, your visitors will start to turn away if it takes five minutes to load an ad-infested page.

THE VERDICT

How flashy does it look?	★★★★★
Use to site visitors?	★★★★★
How easy is it to add?	★★★★★

Best service
www.tradedoubler.com

While we've shown you a few tricks and tips to get your site looking more professional and classy, it's worth remembering that this is just the equivalent of dipping your toes in the murky waters of Web gadgetry. There's so much out there that you could conceivably lose yourself in a mist of radio streams, news tickers and Flash-generated content. The tip is always to be sensible – the fact remains that no-one is going to return to your site if it takes 15 minutes to load because of an irrational glut of plug-ins, gadgets and fancy dan extras.

Even more important than that is the content of your site itself. We'd suggest not even looking at any of these add-ons until you've completely sorted out your site in the first place. These gadgets might add to your site, but they won't hide its poor quality if it looks like a pig's ear. □

"Be sensible. No-one will visit your site if it takes 15 minutes to load an irrational number of plug-ins and gadgets"

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Book On

www.RYANAIR.com

RYANAIR.COM

THE LOW FARES WEBSITE

ONLINE SOAPS

Forget about Coronation Street and EastEnders on the goggle box – **Robin Lewis** gets all lathered up with the Web's best soaps

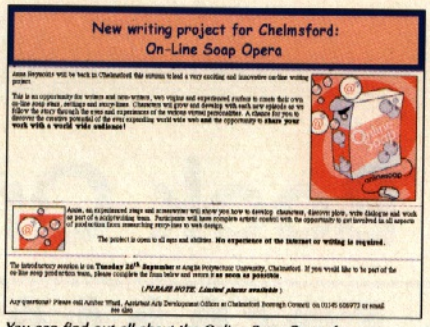
It's a cold and wet Tuesday in Chelmsford, Essex, and by seven o' clock it's already dark. The people still out and about are mostly trying to find buses or trains home, and the atmosphere is one of a town on the verge of nodding off. Yet on the third floor of one of Anglia Polytechnic University's study blocks, about a dozen people are busy handing out personalities.

"Would he say that or would he say something stronger?" asks an elderly lady with strong glasses. "Miserable old git, perhaps?" she ventures, grinning from ear to ear.

A young man in a Slipknot T-shirt chimes in. "Damian's not really a Satanist," he says, before giving a vivid account of Damian's obsession with a female priest. A girl talks through the drudgery of her character's existence while the rest of the group listen, occasionally offering helpful comments and suggestions. A man called Mr X is discussed, though little is known about this influential figure's shadowy background.

About an hour and a half into the discussion a fight breaks out, the week's flashpoint and another twist in the tale of the UK's newest online soap opera.

"Now listen very carefully, I shall say this only once..."



New writing project for Chelmsford:
On-Line Soap Opera

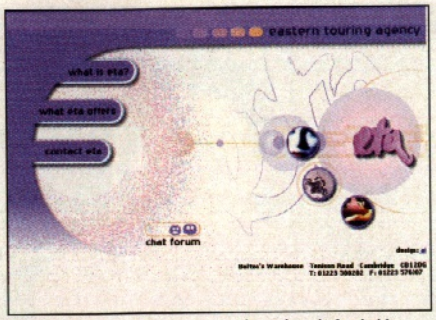
You can find out all about the Online Soap Opera from ***www.online-soap.com***

Soap duds

The master of ceremonies at this storytelling session is Anna Reynolds, a well-established scriptwriter and playwright. Her biography makes impressive reading; formerly the playwright-in-residence at the Mercury Theatre and the University of Essex, the Writer's Guild gave Anna the Best Fringe Play Award for her play *Jordan* (co-written with Moira Buffini) in 1992. She's currently adapting the Julie Myerson novel *The Grass Is Singing* into a film starring Tim '*Reservoir Dogs*' Roth.

Anna is helping to create this online soap with the help of Chelmsford Borough Council Arts Development. This is part of a project by the Eastern Touring Agency (**www.eastern-touring.org.uk**), and it's a scheme funded largely by money from the National Lottery. The only one with serious writing experience in the group, she admits that this particular project is as new for her as it is for everyone else: "I was slightly

Anna Reynolds, master of ceremonies for the online soap



The Eastern Touring Agency is a scheme largely funded by the National Lottery that has helped the Chelmsford soap

scared of the Net and the idea of working online in any way. It's the complete opposite of everything that straightforward playwrights do. This worried me because I felt it could be the future – you've got to be interactive and that means you lose control. Then I realised that this means there can also be great freedom.

"It's an interesting project for me because instead of being able to use the strict rules about writing a play or something for the screen, there are no rules. Effectively, we have to make them up as we go along. There aren't many good UK soaps around, so there isn't much to go on there either."

As well as budding writers, there are Web designers and students on multimedia courses attending the weekly creative sessions. Anna acknowledges that the lines between who does what are becoming increasingly blurred: "Those people who came as Web designers are getting involved in the creative side, and those who are writers are intrigued by the Web aspect of things. We've got a good mix of people now."

The soap is being entirely written, designed and rolled out in-house. The latest technology is on-hand; Mac G4 Cubes will power the project, and there's also help from Ultralab, APU's technology research centre which is providing the venue and resources for the project.

Richard Millwood is from Ultralab. He takes part in the sessions and is on-hand to offer advice and help on the design and technology the team will have to use: "What we in Ultralab believe is that the technology that computers and the Internet offer together are ripe for enhancing creativity.

"Although this is not research in the normal sense of the word, it's a great creative opportunity for all involved to work together and

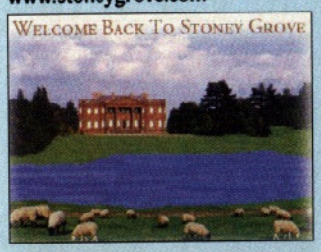
Richard Millwood: the behind-the-scenes technical wizard

FIVE OF THE BEST ONLINE SOAPS

SO, WHILE YOU'RE WAITING THE LAUNCH OF WWW.ONLINE-SOAP.COM, WHY NOT TRY THESE OTHER INTERNET SOAPS TO WHET YOUR APPETITE

STONEY GROVE

www.stoneygrove.com



A PROFESSIONAL ATTEMPT (if a little heavy on the sheep), with links to all sorts of places around the fictional village of Upper Puckering in the south of England. You can visit the Village Idiot (that's the local pub) for a pint of Nun's Habit (that's the local beer) and even play a game of darts with the regulars.

The story is text-based, though the non-linear structure means that readers can dip in and out as much as they like. The Puckering Gazette keeps you up-to-date with all the news, and the interactive pictures add an element of whodunnit.

SOAP RATING 3/5

ONLINE CAROLINE

www.onlinecaroline.com

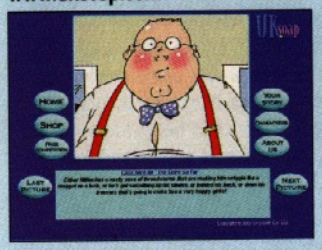
THE MAGNIFICENT ONLINE Caroline is a fine example of how to use the technology of the Internet to create a new twist on an old genre. We won't go into details for fear of giving too much away, but suffice to say, the site has already been nominated for two BAFTAs.

It's very cleverly set out to be as convincing as possible. Don't take it too seriously – we've heard of people who were genuinely sucked in by the experience – but if you're looking for a cross between *Big Brother* and *Bridget Jones* with a bit of genetic engineering thrown in, look no further.

SOAP RATING 5/5

UKSOAP

www.uksoap.com



THE *CARRY ON* of online soaps, UKSoap is a cartoon-based interactive site. The action centres around Gigabyte Inc's newest, an attractive young woman called Sue. Readers can add their own suggestions as to how they think the story should go via email and the writers apparently put these into the soap.

The problem is… well, we never thought we'd say this… but there are too many double entendres. It's pitched as an out-and-out comedy, but there are only so many sniggering penis references the viewer can stand before it all gets a bit tedious. No, really, there are.

SOAP RATING 2/5

ATTACHMENTS

www.seethru.co.uk

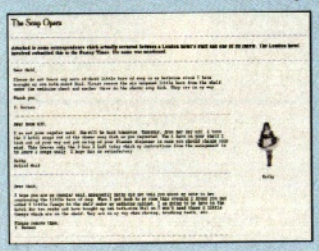
BBC2'S NEW DRAMA series from the makers of *This Life* and *Cops*. Lots of wobbly camera action, then, and with this Internet tie-in to boot. The plot revolves around twenty-something .com entrepreneurs who have sex, take drugs and swear a lot – and are fractionally less annoying on the small screen than they would be in real life.

Attachments could have been a fascinating dramatisation of what life is really like in the .com revolution. As it is even the strong language, full frontal nudity and graphic sexual content can't disguise the fact that this is a missed opportunity.

SOAP RATING 2/5

SOAP OPERA

www.andrewor.dircon.co.uk/soap.htm



OK, SO IT'S not a soap opera in the traditional sense of the word, but Soap Opera is nevertheless very funny. This Web page takes the form of correspondence between the guest at a London hotel and the hotel staff.

The whole thing seems more at home in *Fawlty Towers* than in the *Sunday Times*, where it was apparently printed a short while ago. Basically, Soap Opera is a story of one man in a hotel, several maids, and a mission to get rid of soap. Read it and see.

SOAP RATING 4/5

ONLINE SOAPS

ARTS ON THE NET

NOT JUST SOAP ON A HOPE

CHELMSFORD Borough Council's online soap project is part of the unique Get Wired project run by the Eastern Touring Agency (ETA), funded by Lottery money.

Get Wired is working in six venues in the East of England to develop new technology in the arts. In addition to the projects, ETA has hosted national conferences about new technology and the arts and organised online discussion forums about arts and technology.

Jonathan Goodacre, ETA's Marketing Development Manager, said: "The online projects aim to be more than just Web sites – they try to be part of the venue they're involved with, so there's a connection between the Internet and the work of that venue."

Amber Ward from Chelmsford Arts Development (**www.chelmsfordbc.gov.uk/arts/artsdev.htm**) said: "We're privileged to have been offered this opportunity. The online soap is proving to be a hugely successful launch to our new technology programme. As a public-funded arts body we must meet the needs of modern society and embrace technology. The Net as an artistic and creative tool is only just being discovered – the potential is unlimited."

Amber Ward, from Chelmsford Arts Development, is proud to be involved in the project

MEET THE STARS

WELL, TWO OF THEM ANYWAY...

Name? Andy Grey
Age? 36
Occupation? Multimedia Systems student
Why are you here? "I do writing in my spare time, so this is something really nice to try. I wouldn't like to say whether this is going to work or not but I'm looking forward to getting on to the Internet. I've just started a course in Multimedia Systems and part of the course is about designing Web sites from the aesthetic point of view as well as the technical side."
Character? "I missed the session where we got to choose our characters, so I'm Marge, a 45-year-old market researcher."

Name? Marianne Mallia
Age? 43
Occupation? Psychologist
Why are you here? "I previously did some work with Anna on a course she ran for women writers and I was contacted to see if I was interested. I put my name forward to see if I'd get in – and here I am.

"It's quite interesting because this is something completely new. The Internet is revolutionising lots of the things that we do."
Character? "My character is Trixie, the femme fatale biker with a past. She plays the lead guitar in a band. Oh, and she's a lesbian."

do something that hasn't been done before. Plus, this is great fun to be involved with."

The soap of things to come?

You might think that online soaps would be where the Internet would come into its own. As a 'narrowcasting' medium (one that can be personalised, rather than being the same for everyone), online soaps should be booming.

They're not, and it's difficult to work out exactly why. There are interesting experiments – as you can see on the previous page – but in truth there aren't that many and they aren't that good. Perhaps because of the well-documented British Net shyness – the standard in the US is much higher – accompanied by the fact that the Internet is still seen primarily as a work tool rather than a recreational one has something to do with it. The attempts so far have been, in the main, amateurish, and this is something that this group intends to change.

There are eight planned episodes so far, and the site is intended to launch in either February or March next year. The project has managed to obtain the wonderfully-simple (and amazingly not-already-taken) URL **www.online-soap.com**. Details are sketchy at the moment – it is, after all, a work-in-progress – and the project has yet to be officially named.

*The Chelmsford soap is part of Get Wired a two-year project that's funded by lottery money (**www.getwired.org.uk**)*

After much discussion, the Chelmsford group's soap is taking shape – with people of all ages working on the project

But already it's beginning to take shape. The action will be based around fake footage from various CCTV cameras and the events depicted in them, a novel idea that could fool and attract many people across the voyeur-loving Net.

Anna adds: "People will be trying to work out whether it's real or not. You can leave a lot as mystery and that can form part of the enticement of it. There's a limit to how we can manipulate things because of time and technology restraints, but the ideas are there."

The project is certainly aiming high: "It sounds tacky, but we want to end up with something that's as gripping as *Big Brother* was, and maybe for some of the same reasons. We want something you would want to be gripped by."

The next *Big Brother*? Watch this soap. □

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first person

Planning online: Party hardy

BRIGHTON PARTY PLANNER, MARGOT, USES HER WEB SITE TO HELP ORGANISE EVENTS THAT FIZZLE RATHER THAN FAIL. **JO CHIPCHASE** GETS GLITTERED UP AND GOES IN SEARCH OF A PARTY WITH A HAPPY ATMOSPHERE

Imagine the scenario. You've put time and effort into organising a party during the festering season, but you haven't paid sufficient attention to detail.

Dave the DJ is playing Steps records like there's no tomorrow and an awful squawking sound is emanating from his dodgy speakers. The booze has run out, the handful of freaks who have turned up are fighting over the last droplet of wine and you haven't got a doorperson who can take control. Two 17-year-olds have snuck in, and one of them has thrown up on your fake fur trousers. A strange man in the corner is talking to the faeries while trying to hump a parlour palm.

Margot and Chessie, on the verge of another entertainment breakthrough

Margot's monthly melees

There's no need for a party to descend into such anarchy (well, unless you want it to). If you want to organise a bash with style and panache, you could do worse than take the advice of Margot, a Brighton-based party promoter who runs monthly theme events at local venues. She uses her Web site at (**www.margots.org**) alongside email promotion (not spam, darling), to attract the right clientele. Margot started out in July 1999 with a 'Cheese and Wine' themed party in the local Hanbury Arms. From that point onwards, a Web site was used to put event information up. Margot's opt-in emailing list informs people of forthcoming parties – without any need for envelope stuffing and stamps. This leaves production resources free for props and other essential ingredients.

The most popular section on Margots.org is the photo gallery, which shows party guests dressed up in interesting outfits and in various stages of debauchery. Margot says: "It's best to wait until your guests are relaxed as gathering them round for a posed portrait doesn't get the best picture. People love to see photos of themselves after the event, as it fills in those blank moments, and the gallery is one of the strongest attractions on the Web site. The photos give a flavour of what our nights are about, and entice like-minded people to join us at the next party."

"A strange man in the corner is talking to the faeries while humping a parlour palm"

Top party tips

What does Margot think are the most important elements of a successful party? She says: "Enthusiastic guests help. Getting the right venue for the type of party or event is vital. High ceilings and strip lights will not help you achieve an intimate, relaxed feel.

"But then again, if you're judging the biggest cucumber at the village hall, this may well be helpful. These, and many other useful tips, can be found on the site. Whatever you do, enjoy your event and don't get so drunk you fall off a table and damage yourself." □

For an idea of what Margot's Parties is about, have a look at the online galleries

MORE PARTY SITES ON THE NET

Party Pages
http://partypages.co.uk

Party Pages is a resource with a UK focus. You'll find suppliers of everything from mobile discos to caterers, all searchable by region. The handy 'create a party' facility will help you arrange everything from a club night to an office party. It will even help you invite your guests.

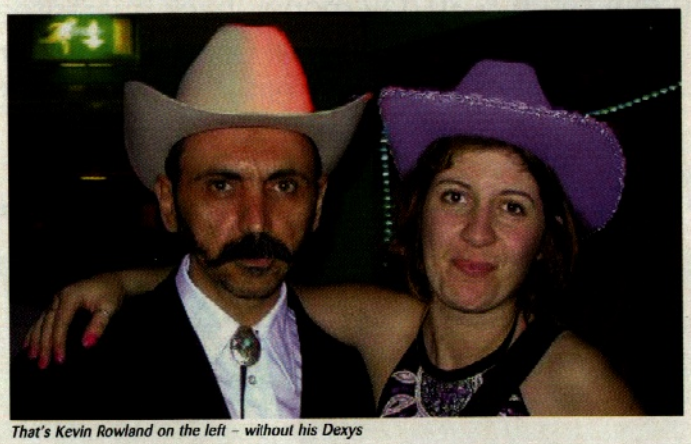
PartyParties
www.partyparties.co.uk

If the PartyParties site were a venue, it would be the Ritzy. You'll find tips on organising hen nights, stag nights, anniversaries, and you can search for venues holding 10-250+ people – although the results are aimed at punters rather than serious party planners.

Photos by John Haberfield

Watch out for shady characters at your event

A hot thing to get you going at a party



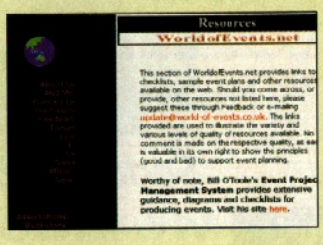
That's Kevin Rowland on the left – without his Dexys

EntsWeb
www.entsweb.co.uk

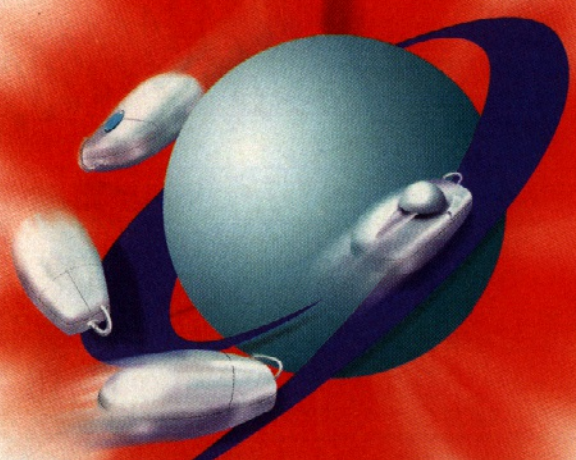
EntsWeb is a searchable directory of entertainment, music and leisure resources, and, unlike some other sites, it manages to avoid being tacky. You can look up a whole host of useful things from DJs to belly dancers. An ideal resource if you're planning a large-scale event.

WorldofEvents.net
www.users.totalise.co.uk/~event-management/world/events/evresources.htm

Whether you're organizing a corporate event or a private party, WorldofEvents will help you (if you can remember that long-winded URL).



Stuck in a webjam? Land on the right orbit.



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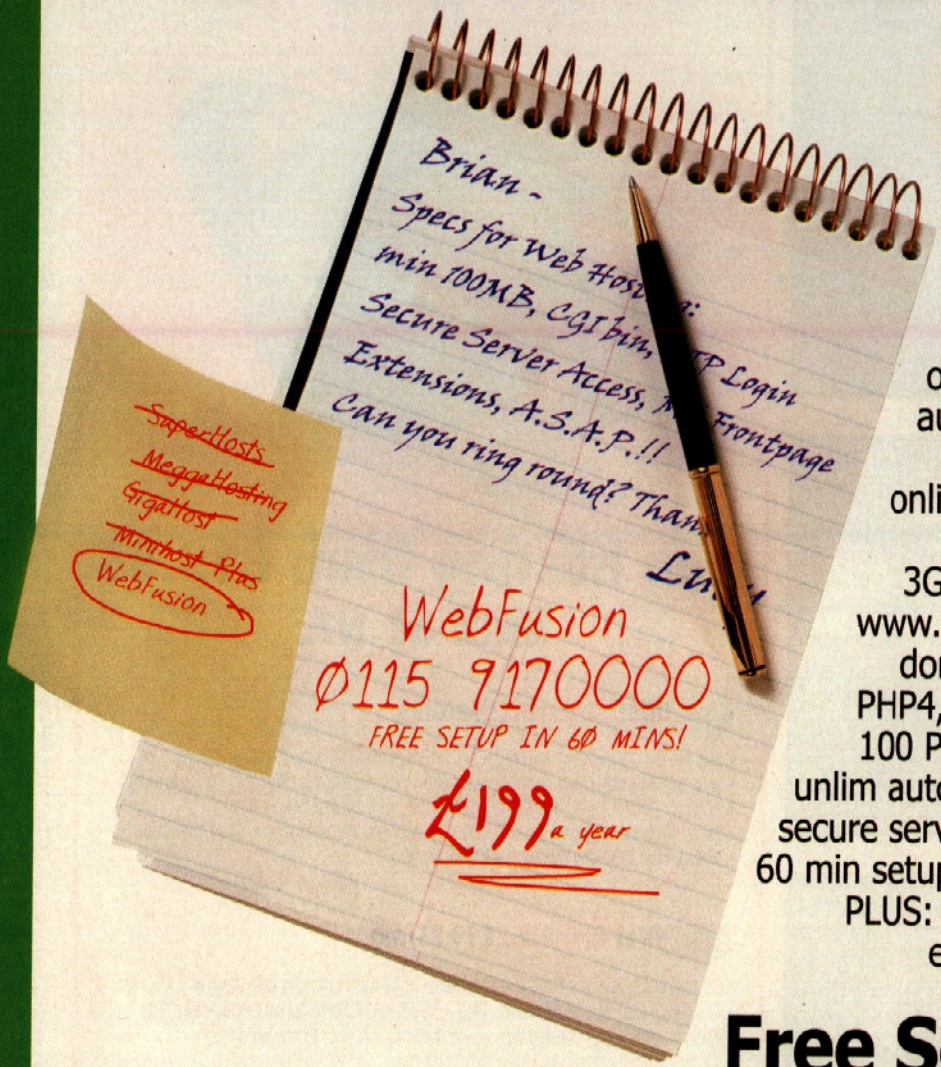

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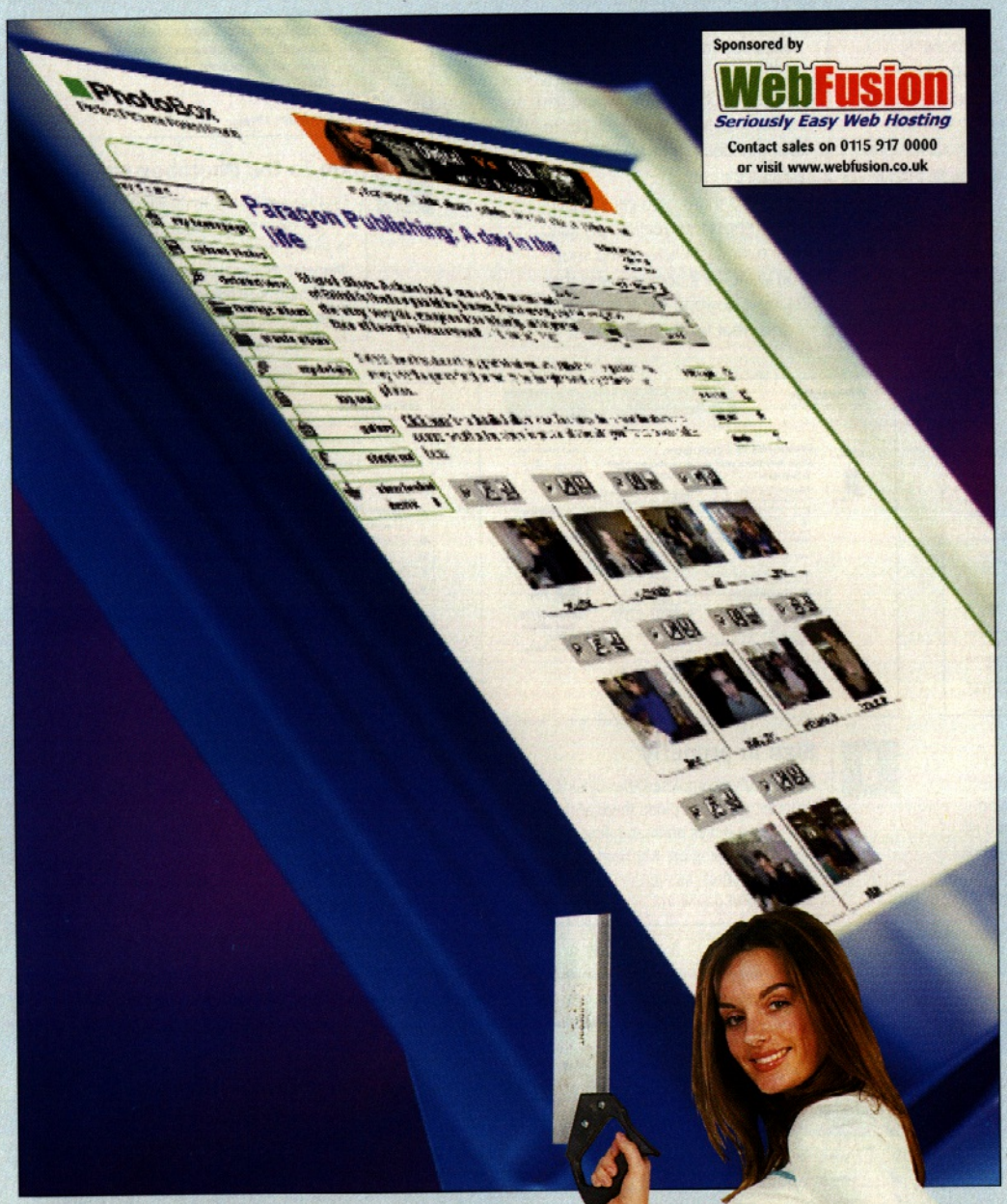

INSIDE NET WORKSHOP

LOOKING TO BUILD a fantastic Web site or add some pizazz to your Web surfing? This is the hands-on section of the magazine where we help you turn those thoughts into reality. Over the next few few pages, we'll explain clearly and precisely how to use the latest Internet software and HTML code to create the results you want.

Practical Internet is always keen to get feedback from readers, so if you like a particular tutorial or would like to see a subject or program covered here, send us an email at **pi@paragon.co.uk**.

Tutorials

BEGINNER TUTORIALS — **If you're new to the Net, our beginner tutorials will show you the way**

Photobox 72
Store your digital pictures on an online photo album and then have them developed

Outlook Express and Hotmail 74
We show you how to configure Outlook Express to send emails using Hotmail

INTERMEDIATE TUTORIALS — **These guides are ideal for the more experienced user**

ActiveShop 76
Create an eCommerce shop in just an hour using ActiveShop on our cover CD-ROM

Christmas emails 78
Send seasonally-enhanced email messages from Outlook with these stationary add-ons

ADVANCED TUTORIAL — **Old hands can sharpen their skills in our advanced section**

Flash animated buttons, part two 80
If you were left on tenderhooks after last issue's Flash tutorial (and who wouldn't be?) here's the second part in all its glory. If you did miss out, though, turn to page 145 for information on back issues

HOME IMPROVEMENT — **How to make your Web site stand out from the rest**

Adobe GoLive 5 82
GoLive is Adobe's flagship Web page design package and it has now been given a brand new face-lift for its latest incarnation – GoLive 5. We show you how to create a basic home page using some of the new features

Building pages with tables 84
HTML is indeed a wondrous and versatile beast, as this tutorial shows. We show you how it's possible to design entire Web pages by using HTML tables as a flexible framework.

Advice

Q&A 89
Clive Parker sorts out your problems at our Internet helpdesk

Web page Q&A 93
All your home page hassles are sorted by James Seabright

Design doctor 93
Designs on life for your home page

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Using an online photo album

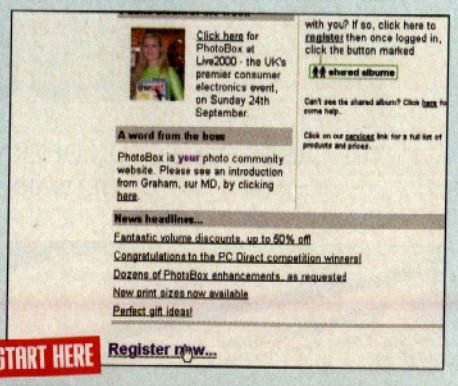
How to: Store your digital pictures on an online photo album with Photobox, then have your nicest shots developed into high quality prints

BEGINNER TUTORIAL

AS THE LURE of the digital camera entices more and more people into its murky world, Joe Public is starting to relish the opportunity to mix and match pictures as they are taken, filtering out the rubbish instead of having a film developed only to realise that they are all of your thumb.

While digital cameras are about as easy to use as a tin opener these days, most people don't quite know what to do with the photographs. Okay, downloading them onto your PC is a doddle, but what about if you want to let a group of your mates see the fruits of your labour? Well, we've taken a gander at **www.photobox.co.uk**, where you can upload all of your pictures to form an album that anybody you specify can see.

What's more, you can convert digital shots into real-life prints to mull over. Just click on the shots you want – it'll cost you less than taking it down to the local chemist – and what for them to arrive.

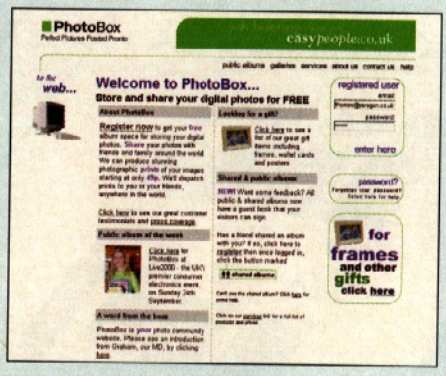


1 Go to the Photobox site

First up, we'll have to register for the Photobox service. Worry not, for it's free. Go to **www.photobox.co.uk**, and click on the 'Register' button at the bottom of the page. From here, you'll be taken to the registration page, where you fill in your details.

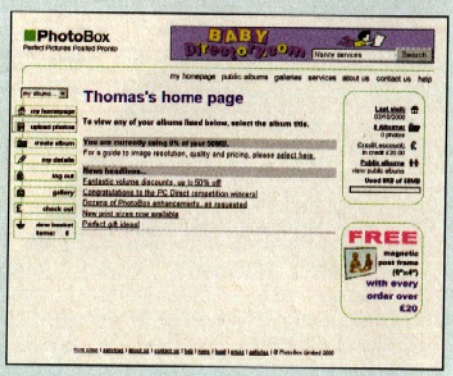
2 Your registration details

Complete the questions on this page as required. Those questions marked with an asterisk are necessary, so make sure you fill these in especially. Click on the 'I agree' box, then fill out the survey on the next page if you so desire. It won't take too much of your time.



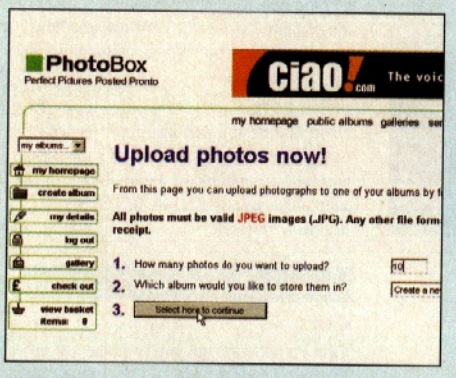
3 Sign in properly

Once you've completed the registration process, you can upload there and then, but you'll get a better understanding of how it all works by clicking on 'My Homepage'. When the page comes up, sign in using your email address and password.



4 Your home page

This is your own home page. On the left is the navigation bar, taking you to various parts of the site. The right-hand side has all of your account information, telling you how much of your 50Mb you have used, and how much credit you have to get photographs developed.

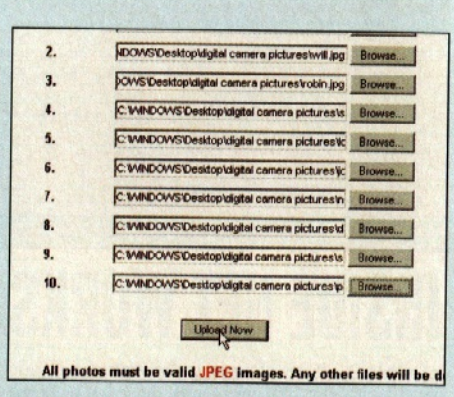


5 Uploading photos

Click on 'Upload Photos' in the navigation bar, and you'll see this screen. Here you tell Photobox how many images you'd like to upload and which album to put them in. As we don't have any albums set up, keep this option at 'Create a new album', then click on 'Continue'.

6 An album name and description

Now it's time to give your new album a name. If the pictures are all from a certain place or time, name the album accordingly. Otherwise, just call it something that your friends and family might understand. Type in a description of the album underneath, then click 'Save this album'.



7 Uploading your pictures

Here, you can browse through your hard drive to find each of your images individually. You'll be asked to find the number of JPEGs you specified for your album (they have to be JPEGs), although you can leave blanks if you don't have all the images right now. Click on 'Upload now'.

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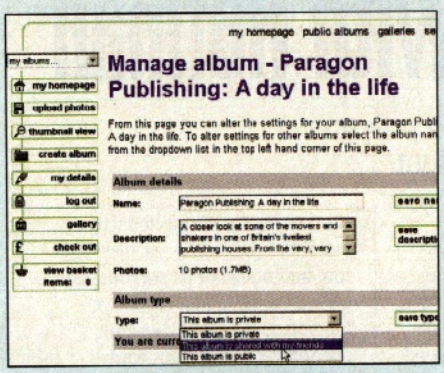
8 Your album

This screen tells you your images are uploaded. There's a thumbnail of each image, as well as the description you gave. You can have them developed here, but we want to make the files accessible to our friends, so select your album name from the drop-down menu at the top-left.



9 Managing your album

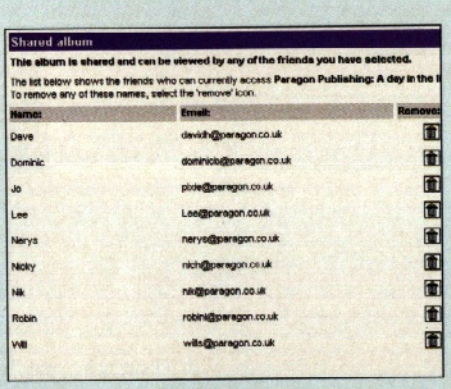
On the next page, select 'Manage Album'. Now, you can choose which kind of album to have. We want our mates to see our pics, so click on 'Album Type' and change it to 'This album is shared with friends'. Click on the 'Save Type' button.

JARGON BUSTER

JPEG
JPEG is well known as the best file format for compressing graphics with high colour definition, like photographs, with very little loss of quality. Because of this, JPEG is the recognised standard for Web photographic images.

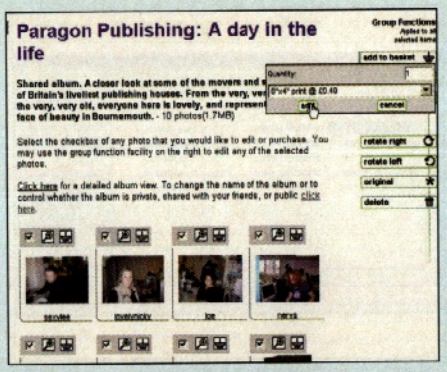
Thumbnail
This is a smaller version of an image, which allows you to preview a number of larger picture without having to wait on them downloading.

Upload
The opposite of download. Whereas downloading is copying a file from the Internet to your computer, uploading is transferring a file or files from your computer to the Internet.



10 Adding friends

Now add the names and email addresses of who you want to see your album. Once you've done this, an email will be sent to each of the people involved. As long as they use the email address you specified to sign in, they'll have access to your piccies. Go back to the main album page.

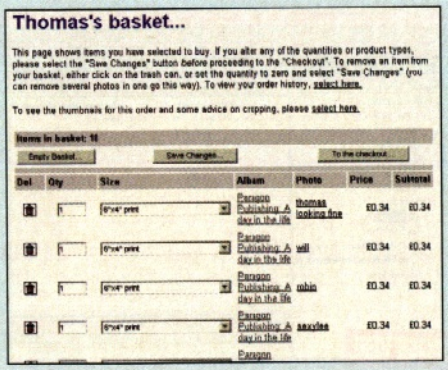


11 Purchasing pictures

Now, if you or your mates want to have any pictures developed, you just have to follow the next few steps. In the main album page, click on 'Select All', then 'Add to Basket'. This will bring up a box asking which size of picture to go for, and telling how much this will cost. Click 'Add'.

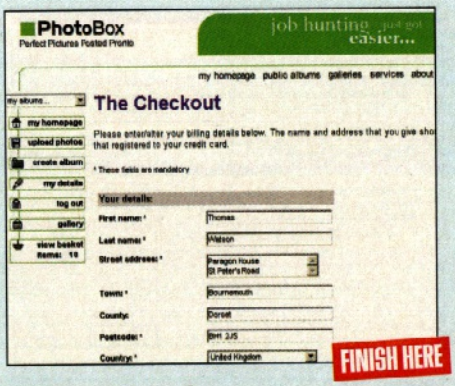
TOP TIP!

Credit where it's due
To develop pictures, you need credits in your account. Click on 'My Account' at any time, enter your Switch or credit card details and tell Photobox how much to increase your credit by. Then you're ready to spend, spend, spend.



12 Your basket

You'll now see a list of the items currently in your basket. You can choose to discard any of these if you have second thoughts, but when you're happy with your selection, click on 'To the checkout' to start handing over your money.



13 The checkout

Now enter the delivery details for your order, so that Photobox can get the pictures to you. We ordered our pictures at 4pm on Thursday, and they arrived in the morning post the next day, so you shouldn't have to wait too long to be taken into photographic heaven.

TOP TIP!

Your image size
To upload images, you have to make them small enough to download but big enough to see. With Photobox, try to make your JPEGs somewhere around 100-200Kb. Use a program like Paint Shop Pro to edit your pictures.

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Using Outlook with Hotmail

How to: Configure Outlook Express to pick up and send emails using a Hotmail account

BEGINNER TUTORIAL

on the CD

You can find Outlook Express on this month's Practical Internet CD

WEB-BASED EMAIL is great, mainly because it lets you check your mail from anywhere in the world. Chances are, though, that you spend most of your time at home, and not gallivanting around the globe, stopping off at a cybercafé in Mexico City to see if your Aunt Beryl liked that tea cosy you sent her.

Checking your email on Hotmail is frankly tedious if you're sat at home, waiting for the page to download. Not only that, but you have to remain connected to the Net while you write your messages too, and not all of us are fortunate enough to have free access yet. So, you're really talking about spending some of your hard-earned wonga on something that isn't really that interesting.

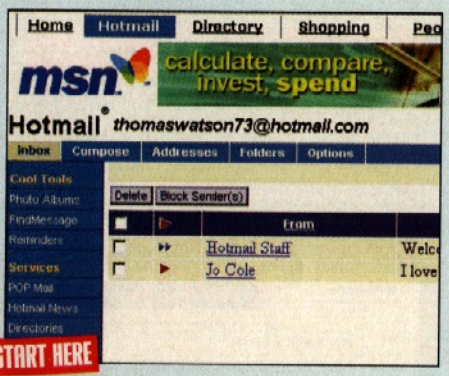
What this adds up to is slightly more hassle than we would really like. But don't fret any more, for it is actually quite straightforward to configure Outlook Express to deal with your Hotmail account.

JARGON BUSTER

Web-based email
This system of email stores all of your messages, both sent and received, on a server on the Net. This means that the account isn't tied to one computer, and can be accessed from anywhere, as long as you have Internet access.

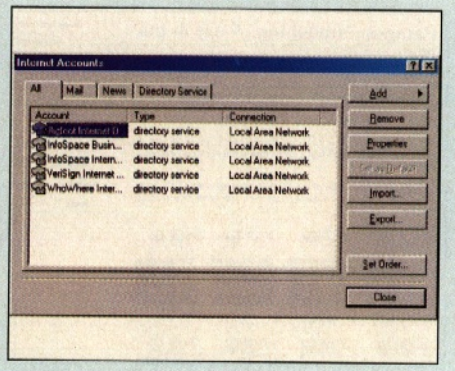
POP3
The standard method of email in Outlook Express, Post Office Protocol 3 allows you to access your email, and download them onto your computer. This is ideal for reading your messages offline, without having to worry about phone bills.

Inbox
The folder where your received mails are stored. This is usually the default, so you can automatically see any new messages.



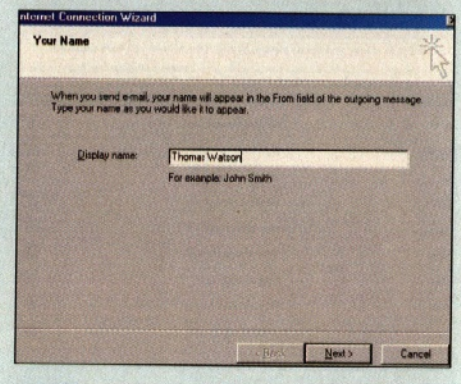
1 The standard way

This is the traditional way to check your Hotmail account for new emails. While it has a purpose, it's too slow and cost-inducing for our highly critical minds, so you can close this down. Now open up Outlook Express, as this is where the action will be taking place from now on.



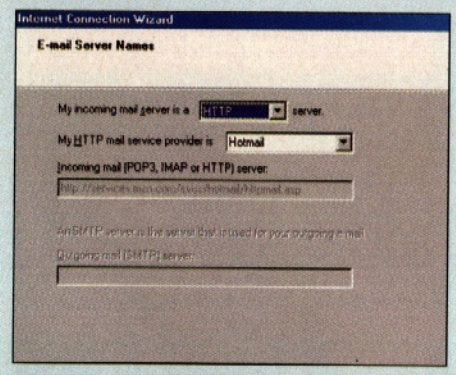
2 Account options

Once you've opened Outlook Express, go directly to 'Tools', then 'Accounts'. This will bring up the Accounts box, where you can see just which accounts are configured. You'll see that there are tabs for Mail and News, as well as Directory Services.



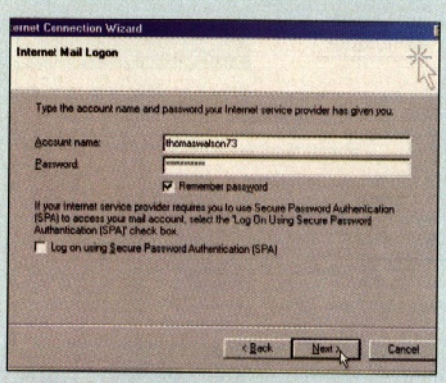
3 A new account

Now, click on the 'Add' button, then choose 'Mail'. This will allow us to enter a new mail account. On the first screen, enter your name, which is the name that will be shown in the Inbox of anyone lucky enough to receive an email from you. Press 'Next'.



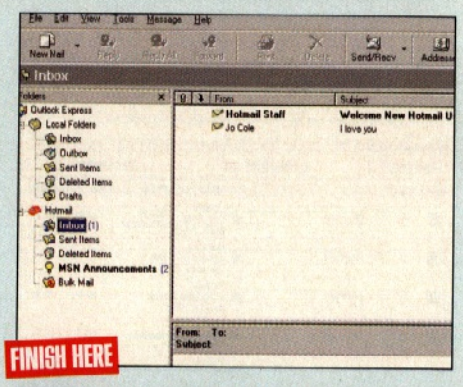
4 Your Hotmail address

On the next screen, type in your Hotmail address, and click on 'Next'. On the next screen, make sure that you select the above options. If there is a space to type in the 'Incoming mail server' address, type the following: 'http://services.msn.com/svcs/hotmail/httpmail.asp'.



5 Hotmail bonanza

Next, you'll be faced with this screen, where you can see your account name. Fill in your password below this, and if you want to save yourself the hassle of typing it again, tick the 'Remember Password' box. Click 'Next', and then 'Finish' to complete the process.



6 Using Hotmail as normal

You'll see a Hotmail section in the Folders bar – you can now view all of your emails as you would with any other account. Writing and sending an email with Hotmail is just the same too, just select the address to send from in the relevant place, and you're away.

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Java Developer required by one of the UK's top Pre-IPO web based organisations. Not a Dotcom startup (going since 1996) but a strong industry leader. You will have 2 years solid Java experience including JAVA, EJB, Servlets, JDBC and OO Technologies.

CTO (Chief Technology Officer) **£70,000 - £100,000** **London**
CTO required by rapidly expanding digital development consultancy. Working on the latest e-Commerce, m-Commerce and web enabled applications for market leading blue-chip organisations. You will have over 6 years of solid development experience including C/C++, Java, XML, RDBMS, middleware, Applications Integration and UNIX.

PERL / Web Developer **to £50,000 + Bens** **London**
Perl Developer required by leading e-commerce organisation. Minimum of 12 months commercial Perl Development experience including; Apache, RDBMS and UNIX. Working on the latest OO Perl developments including clustered architecture, mod_perl and Database Integration.

Web Developer **£40,000** **London**
You will have 2 Years of web site implementation experience including; DHTML, HTML-4, CSS1 and JavaScript and 6 months of Java experience. Working on the latest in Content Managemnent Software for this market leader. Any experience of ; XML, JNDI, JDBC and RMI is a distinct advantage.

ben@web-recruit.co.uk **Ben Hobbs** **01908 560550**

To enquire about these positions please contact **Richard Nye**

Technical Architect **£70,000 - £120,000** **SW London**
Working for one of the global leaders in Electronic Commerce. You will
Have at least 4 years development experience and have held a high level technical positions (Architect, Lead Engineer, CTO) for at least 2 years. Useful experience includes ; C/C++, Java, RDBMS, COM, Middleware and Project Leadership skills.

Visual Basic/Internet Developer **£35,000 upwards** **London/Surrey**
You will be working on leading edge E-Commerce and telecomms applications for a company at the forefront of this field. You will possess at least two years experience of Visual Basic within an internet based environment. Any experience of VBScript, ASP and SQL Server a distinct advantage.

Internet Systems Developer **to £50,000** **North London**
Working for one of the UK's leading ISP's you will have a thorough knowledge of developing and implementing bespoke systems for clients, a thorough knowledge of UNIX(various flavours), DNS, Bind, Apache Web Servers will be advantageous.

m-Commerce Developer **£40,000-£60,000** **London**
Working on the latest in m-commerce developments utilising skills in WML, COM, ASP, HTML, DHTML, XML and Javascript. At the forefront of new mobile device technology you can expect to work on WAP, Bluetooth and 3G Technologies. Any WAP experience would be viewed as a distinct advantage as would a dynamic attitude and a desire to succeed.

richard@web-recruit.co.uk **Richard Nye** **01908 560550**

To enquire about these positions please contact **Lee Wilkins**

Web Designer **£30,000-£45,000** **London**
My client, a forward thinking and dynamic design agency now require a motivated individual to work collaboratively with client-side product managers, end users, and Information/Graphic Designers. Useful skills include ; Flash, Photoshop, Illustrator, Dreamweaver, Director, Fireworks, HTML and SHTML.

Developer **£35,000 - £50,000** **Middlesex**
Involved in all aspects of the software development lifecycle, you will capture and develop solutions within agreed timescales and to budget while supporting the Project Manager.. Skills should include a mix of ; DHTML, Java, C++, VB, MYSQL, ASP, PHP and ODBC/JDBC.

Software Developer **£30,000-£55,000** **London**
My client is looking for new Software Developers (mid level) to continue the build, launch and run of three European financial portals sites for private investors in the next year. You will have at least one years commercial experience and be responsible for programming medium to large projects. Working on HTML, ASP, SQL, COM and Visual SourceSafe.

ASP Developer **£25,000 - £35,000** **Cambridge**
Working on the latest in web site development utilising a mix of DHTML, VBScript and of course Active Server Pages. Any experience of Databases or SQL Programming would be a distinct advantage.

lee@web-recruit.co.uk **Lee Wilkins** **01908 560550**

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Set up shop in one hour!

How to: Start your own online business the hassle-free way using ActiveShop on this month's cover CD-ROM

INTERMEDIATE TUTORIAL

on the CD

You can find ActiveShop on this month's Practical Internet CD

ACTIVESHOP DEVELOPER EDITION makes building shopping sites a simple and cost effective process. You don't even need to know HTML or a scripting language – just enter product and merchant details through user input forms. Information is stored in a database and pages are built 'on the fly' as a user connects to your shopping site.

Once you've finished building your site, simply publish the database and image files to the ActiveShop Web server. ActiveShop has a built-in FTP-program and makes publishing to the Internet as simple as two button clicks. The product also supports multiple languages and currencies. It features automatic currency conversion, unlimited number of product groups and products and various payment options including integration with PayCash and SECPay. Shops can also be administered online using a browser – enter a username and password – make your changes.

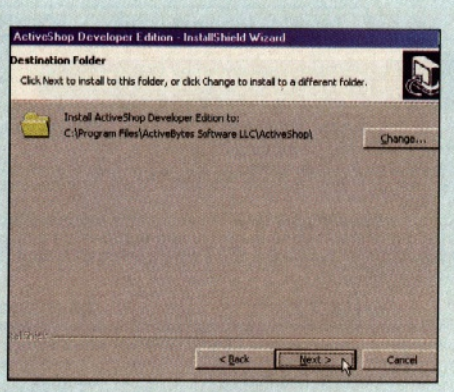
TOP TIP!

ActiveShop requires Microsoft Personal Web Server (PWS) with Active Server Pages (ASP) support. Microsoft's FrontPage version of PWS does not support ASP and should be upgraded. See **www.activeshop.com/support.asp** for upgrade instructions.

START HERE

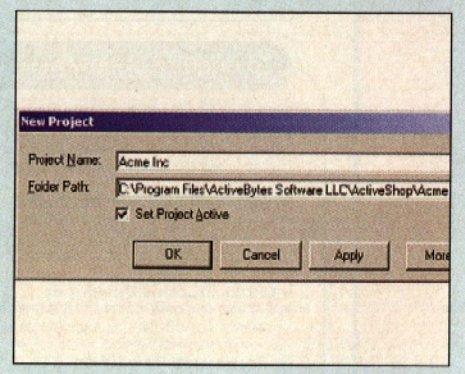
1 Installing ActiveShop

Before installing the ActiveShop software, you must have Microsoft Personal Web Server (PWS) and Internet Explorer installed. Insert the *Practical Internet* CD into your PC and select the 'Next' option when the installer appears.



2 Launching the program

Accept the terms and conditions, then press 'Next' again. Choose a destination folder and click 'Install' to load the program onto your PC. Open ActiveShop then click 'New' on the toolbar or select 'Project' and choose 'New' on the menu bar.

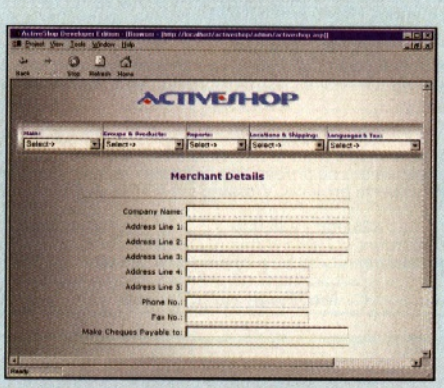


3 Entering a shop name

Open ActiveShop, click 'New' on the toolbar or select 'Project' and choose 'New' on the menu bar. Enter a Project Name, such as Acme Inc. Click the 'OK' button to create the project – the 'Project Explorer' Window will now display an icon for the new ActiveShop project.

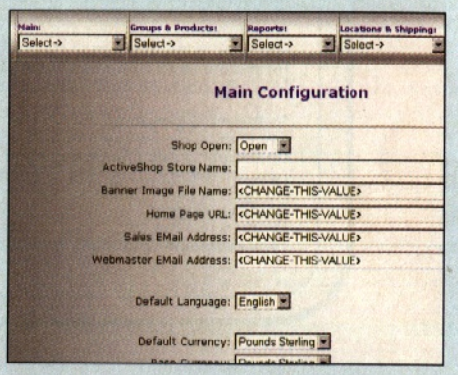
TOP TIP!

Download ActiveShop HealthCheck (**www.activeshop.com**) before installing the software. This program checks that your machine meets the minimum installation requirements and provides help on installing any missing or incorrectly configured components.



4 Creating a new shop

Next, click on the 'Navigate' button down-arrow on the 'Project Explorer' Window tool bar and select the 'http://LocalHost/ActiveShop/Admin/ActiveShop.asp' menu item to start setting up the new shop.



5 Entering company details

Click on the 'Main' drop-down list box and select 'Merchant Details'. Enter your company or sole trader name, address and contact details and click 'Save' to continue. The details will be displayed on the order summary page each time an order is placed.

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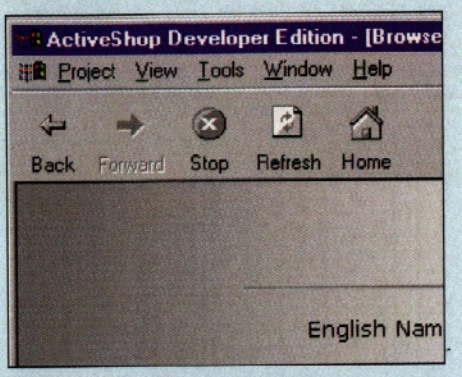
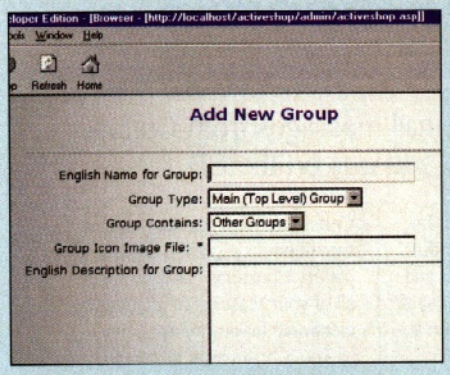


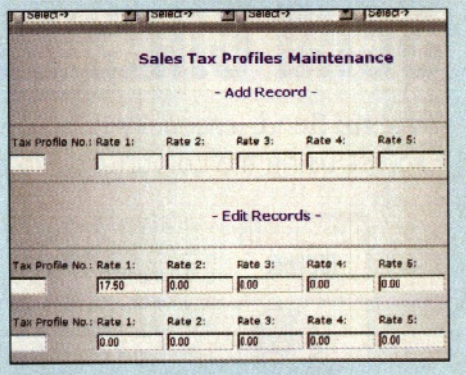
6 Seeking assistance

Click on the 'Main' drop-down list and select 'Main Configuration' to modify the visual appearance of your shop. To view online help on setting main configuration options, click on the 'Help' menu and select 'Contents'. Click the 'Main Configuration' link to continue.



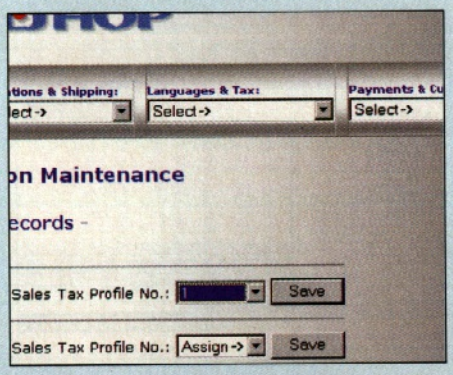
7 Adding product groups

Click 'Groups & Products', choose 'Add New Group', create a new 'Main Group' called Products containing Other Groups. Hit 'Save'. Repeat the process, creating a Sub Group called Widgets. Select 'Group Maintenance' and click the 'Contents' button and 'Add New'.



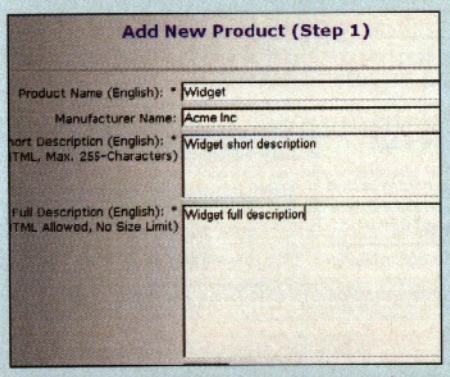
8 Pleasing the tax man

Select 'Tax Profiles' from the 'Languages & Tax' drop-down list box. Enter a new Sales Tax Profile No, and enter 17.5 in the Rate 1 text box. Enter 0 in the four remaining rate boxes. Click 'Add New' to continue. These are used to calculate sales tax on products.



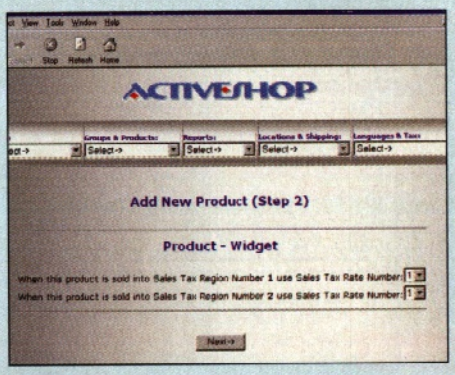
9 Setting country options

Click on the 'Languages & Tax' drop-down list box and select 'Tax Regions'. Assign the newly created tax profile, eg 10, to the United Kingdom 'Sales Tax Region'. Click on 'Save' to commit the changes.



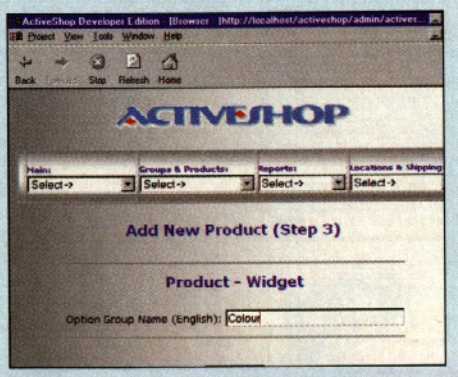
10 Adding new products

Select 'Add New Product' from the 'Groups & Products' drop-down list box. Enter a Product Name, Manufacturer, Short Description and Full Description. The additional fields are optional. Click on the 'Next' button to continue.



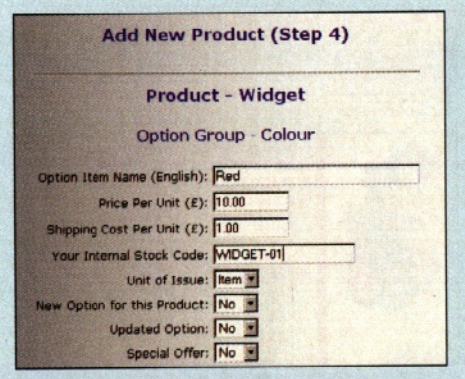
11 Setting product prices

For each Sales Tax Region Number listed (countries or states are grouped by region numbers), select a 'Sales Tax Rate' from the drop-down list box. The rate you applied in step 7, eg 17.5 (%), is used to calculate product sales tax when selling into each region.



12 Entering product details

Enter an 'Option Group Name' in the text box provided, eg Colour, and click on the 'Next' button to continue. You can now add different coloured widgets – referred to as 'Option Items'.



13 Confirming product info

Enter Red, 10.00, 1.00 and WIDGET-01 in the Option Item Name, Price Per Unit, Shipping Cost Per Unit and Your Internal Stock Code text boxes. Click on 'Next' to continue. Click the 'Next' button to continue, then on 'Add' to add the new product to the Widgets group.

14 Viewing your site

Finally, click on the 'Finish' button to complete adding a new product. Click on the 'Navigate' button down-arrow and select the 'http://LocalHost/ActiveShop/ActiveShop.asp' menu item to view the new shop.

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Send Christmas ecards

How to: Send seasonally-enhanced email messages from Outlook Express using the colourful stationery add-ons on the CD

INTERMEDIATE TUTORIAL

on the CD

You can find Christmas Emails on this month's Practical Internet CD

CHRISTMAS IS COMING, and the goose is getting fat. It's time to dust down the tree, fix up the lights, and fill your house with more shiny stuff than you could ever hope to see at a shiny stuff convention.

While you're at it, why don't you sort out your copy of Outlook Express with some specially-designed stationery? No more need you worry about your mates and relations getting tedious bland messages – instead, you can treat them to a variety of colourful Christmassy images. Just think of the money you could save on papery Christmas cards by sending all of your seasonal felicitations by electronic mailing systems.

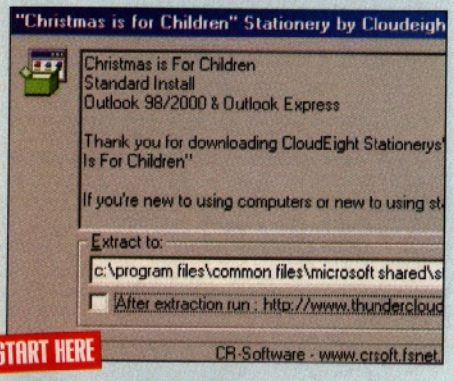
The 'Christmas is for children' stationery from Cloudeight contains images and fonts which, on installation, are copied into your Outlook Express folder so that you can jazz up your emails with all kinds of seasonal regalia. If you love Christmas half as much as we do, you'll adore these treats.

TOP TIP

Message stationary

Creating your own message stationery might seem daunting at first, but all of these pieces of stationery are just HTML files imported into Outlook Express. All you have to do is create an HTML file, with some pretty graphics, of course, then save it to disk. Using the above method, you can then use this as the basis for an Outlook Express message.

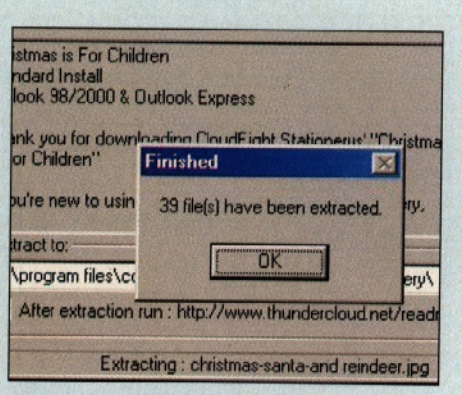
If you don't want to go that far, but you are still keen on having some kind of festive font situation on the go, make sure that you tell Outlook Express to work in HTML. Go to 'Format', then select 'Rich Text' (HTML) instead of Plain Text. After you've done all this, you can then tinker with the fonts and add images as much as you want.



START HERE

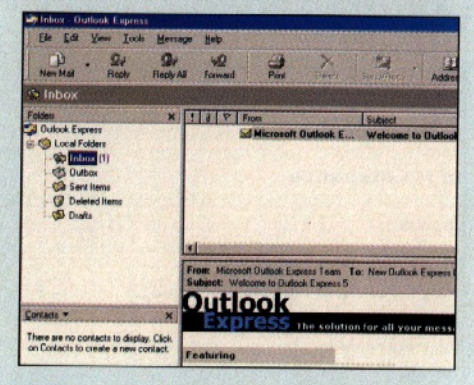
1 Selecting Christmas Emails

To install your stationery, click the 'Christmas emails' item in the Net Workshop menu of the CD interface. On the first screen that appears, untick the box that says to open the Web site. We'll show you how to set up and use the stationery, so you've no need to visit here.



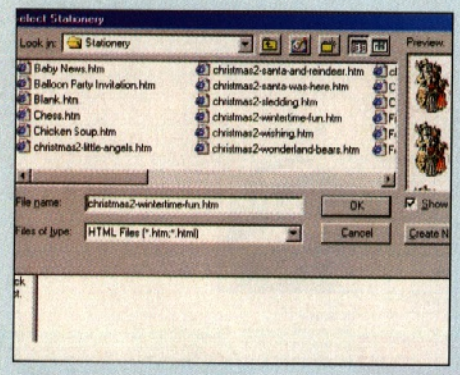
2 Installing the program

Click on 'Start', then watch as the installation process begins, then finishes about two seconds later. Once you see this dialog box, everything is sorted, and you're ready to start using your stationery in Outlook Express.



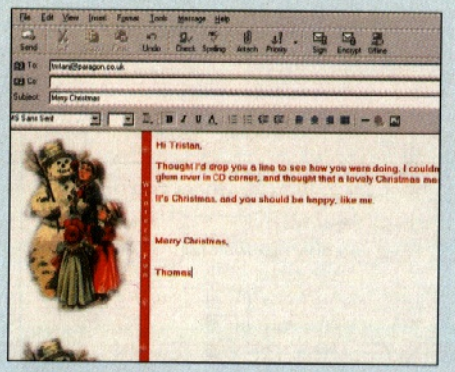
3 Outlook Express action

Before we start creating and sending emails, we have to open up Outlook Express itself. Although you probably usually use the 'New Mail' button at the top-left of the main toolbar, we'll have to create our blank mail using a different method this time.



4 Creating a message

On the main Outlook Express screen, go to 'Message', then choose 'New message using' and finally 'Select stationery'. This brings up the browser, where you should see the stationery items for Outlook Express, with your Christmassy ones mixed in. Choose one that looks seasonal.



5 Adding a festive image

As if by magic, a lovely Christmas-themed picture is in the part where the text normally resides in the message. Don't worry, though, as you can still type here, to the right of the idyllic picture. Type your addressee and the like as you would normally.

FINISH HERE

6 Send your greetings email

Now it's time to send your message. Just click on 'Send', and your message will be transferred as normal. Hey presto, your lucky recipient will be overjoyed when they see your festive message arrive on their PC. Brings a tear to the eye.

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Flash animated buttons Part 2

How to: Make your Web site's menu animated with the second part of our Flash 5 tutorial

ADVANCED TUTORIAL

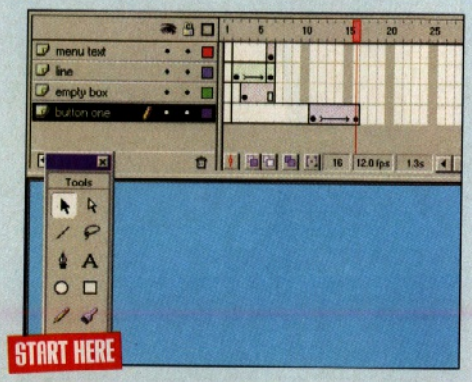
on the CD

You can find a trial version of Flash 5 on this month's Practical Internet CD

HAVING FOLLOWED THE first part of our Flash 5 double header in last month's issue you should now have a few buttons lying around waiting to be animated.

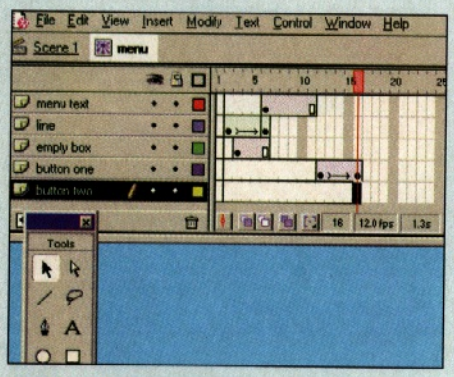
In this part, we'll show you how to work all of your elements together into a fairly complex animation. Because we're using buttons as individual elements within an animated movie, we can also give all of the clip an added level of interactivity. Seeing as you've done the first, arguably more boring bit, you'd be a fool not to carry on and turn your individual elements into something fantastic. All you have to do is follow the rest of our steps to bring you even closer to interface heaven. Once you've finished this, you'll be the proud owner of a fully animated button.

If you missed the first part of our Flash 5 tutorial in November's issue, don't fret. Turn to page 145 to order a back copy.



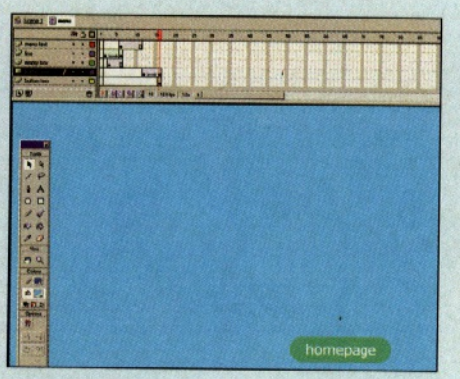
23 Animating

Click on frame 11 then, holding down 'SHIFT', on frame 16. All the active frames in our first button layer should be highlighted. Right-click on any of these frames, and select 'Create Motion Tween'. This will make an animation from 11 to 16, where the button moves down.



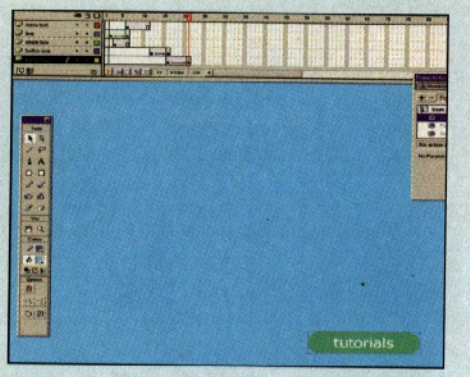
24 Adding more buttons

Now add two other sub-menu buttons to drop down. Click 'Insert a Layer', then call it 'button two' and drag it to the bottom of the layer list. Create a blank keyframe in frame one, then 'Insert a Keyframe' in frame 16. The button will drop down as the other one finishes.



25 Lining it up

Drag your button 2 from the Library onto the stage. It should sit behind the first button, as this is where it will start its animation journey. Ours was the wrong size, so we changed it. Once your second button becomes invisible behind the first, you've succeeded.



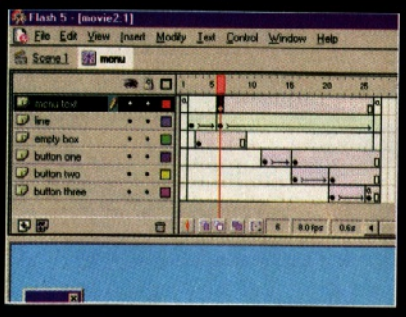
26 Another tween

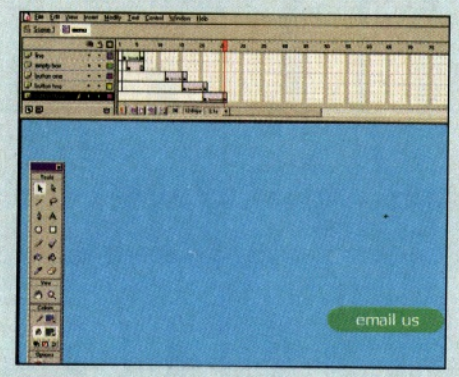
Right-click on frame 16 and select 'Copy', then do the same on frame 21, only choosing 'Paste'. Make sure you're working in frame 21, then move your new button down. Create another tween from frame 16-21. This is your second button now complete.

TOP TIP!

In the right frame of mind

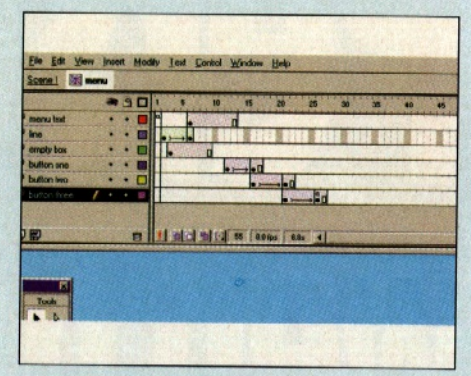
When creating multi-layered, multi-framed works of art, it's easy to get lost in the timeline. You may create a new Keyframe, and start to work on it, only to realise later that the previous frame is selected. Always click on the frame you want to edit.





27 Your final button

Using the above principles, create a tween for your button 3 between frames 21 and 26. Again, take time to ensure the button is in just the right place, and is just the right size. It's also worth checking that each button travels roughly the same distance in its animation.



28 Some boring admin

Click on the 'Actions' button in the bottom-right, and select frame 26 in the 'button three' layer. In the Basic section of the Actions box, double-click on 'Stop'. We need a stop action in frame one. Do the same in any layer in the first frame, so your timeline looks like this.

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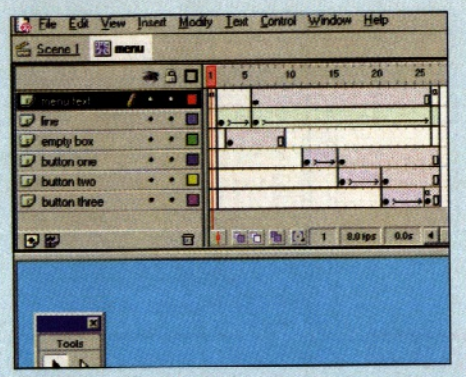
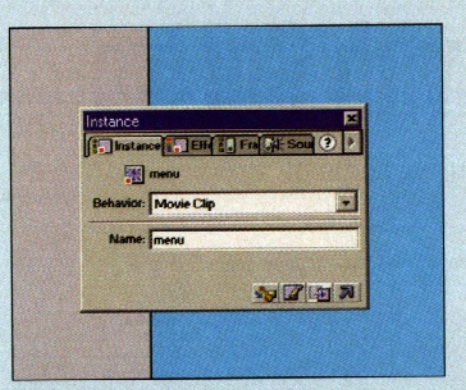


29 Final timeline stuff

If you've been testing your movie by pressing 'Return', you'll see the elements disappear as soon as they've finished loading. To prevent this, create blank keyframes at the end of the animation. In each frame 'Insert a Blank Keyframe' in frame 27.



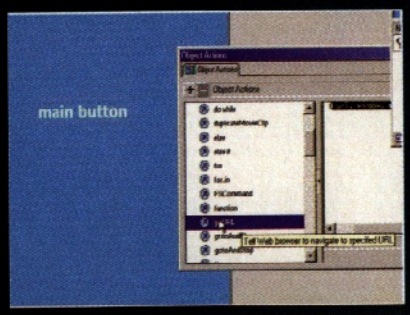
30 The bigger picture

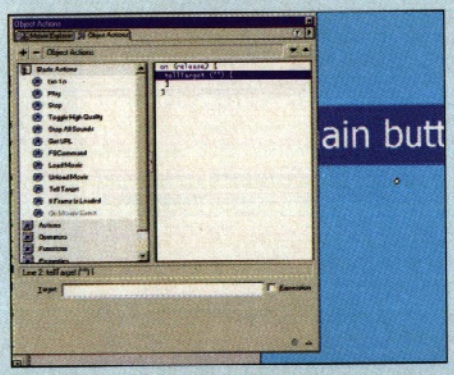
Let's go back to the main movie. Press 'CTRL + E' to get back to the main stage, and drag your 'menu' movie onto the stage. Bring up the Instance panel by pressing 'CTRL + I'. Make sure the clip is selected on the stage, and type in 'menu' in the Name part.

TOP TIP!

Linking to Web pages

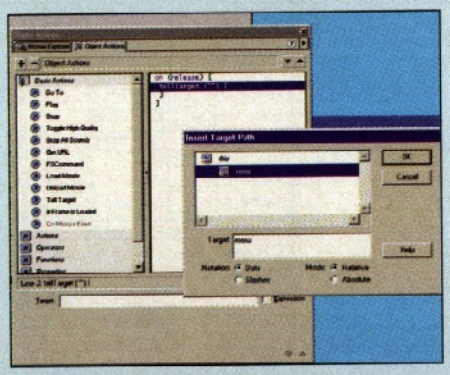
To start linking your buttons to real pages on the Web, simply click on the relevant frame you wish to work on in your button, and go in to Actions. Select 'Get URL', and you can the type in the address of the page you wish to link to.





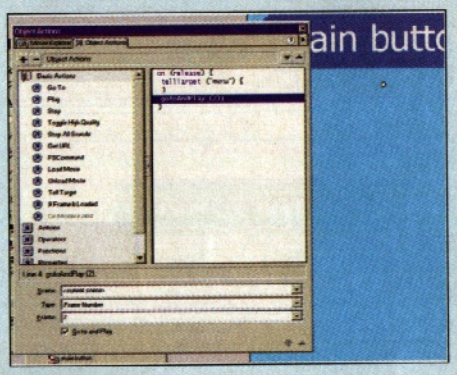
31 Adding actions

Drag your 'main button' from the Library onto the stage. We need to add actions to make the movie clip play from the button. In the Actions section, choose 'Tell Target' from the Basic Actions submenu. This will bring up a dialog box to type in a target.



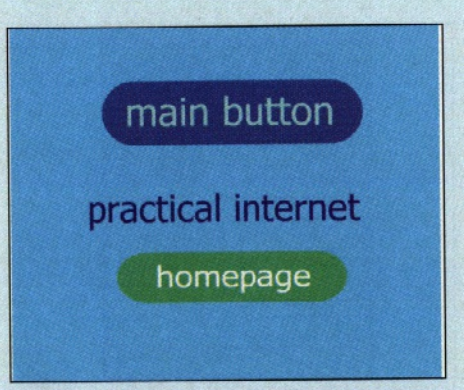
32 Finding your target

Make sure the text cursor is flashing in the text field box, then click on the target icon in the bottom-right of this window. You should now see your 'menu' instance. Click on it to select it, and press 'OK' to get back to the main actions window.



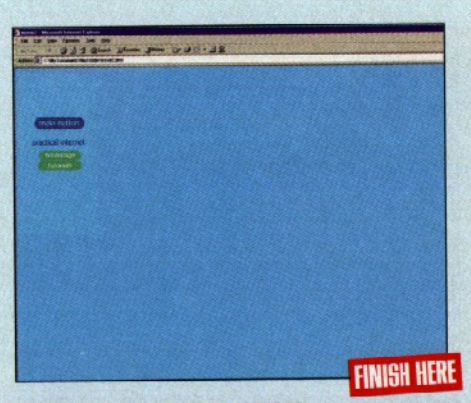
33 Just one more action

Double-click on 'Go To' in the same section, and change the frame number from one to two. Keep with the default of Go To and Play, and we're finished with the actions. Your animated menu is very nearly done.



34 Adjusting the proportions

Save your file (CTRL + S), then test it using CTRL + E. You'll find that your main button is either out of line or completely the wrong size. Go back to the stage, and adjust this until you're happy with it.



35 Exporting to HTML

Go to 'File', 'Publish Settings', then select the HTML tab. We suggest that you stick with the default settings. Press 'Publish' to save your HTML file in the same place as your Flash file. Now, you can open it up in your browser.

ONLINE RESOURCES

www.virtual-fx.net
There are millions of tutorials here, all based around getting the most out of Flash. As with most of the tutorials sites, guides tend to be aimed more for Flash 3 or 4, but you can still complete them in Flash 5.

www.flashkit.com
Tutorials, guides, the whole shebang, Flash-wise. Seen by our CD boy band as the best Flash site on the Net.

www.flashplanet.com
Tutorials, learning guides, clip art, information zones, galleries and all of the paraphernalia that you could ever really hope for regarding the mighty Flash family. This is a must-visit site for Flash users everywhere.

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Make a page with GoLive

How to: Create a simple Web page using some of the new features in Adobe GoLive 5

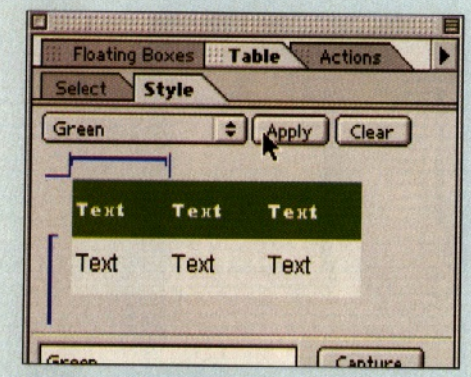
HOME IMPROVEMENT

ADOBE'S FLAGSHIP WEB page design package has recently been given a brand new face-lift for its latest incarnation – Adobe GoLive 5.

There are a whole range of new features in this latest version of the software. All of them will be of great use to novice and expert site builders alike. In this tutorial, you'll be shown the basic way to get around the GoLive 5 interface. You'll also learn how to build a basic page. This is achieved using the new Transform and Align palettes to tidy up images and taking advantage of the speedier ways GoLive allows you to apply colour and style to your designs. Unfortunately a free trial version of the software was not available at the time of going to press, but one should be available shortly for download from **www.adobe.co.uk**.

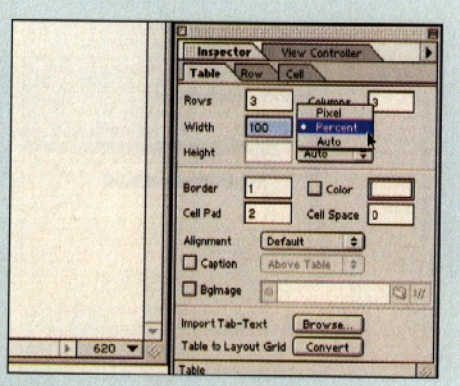
1 Laying the table

We're going to base the page around a table, which is a handy way to structure items. This is done by double-clicking the 'Table' button in the 'Inspector' palette – the one being pointed at by the mouse in the screenshot above. We will now format the table size and appearance.



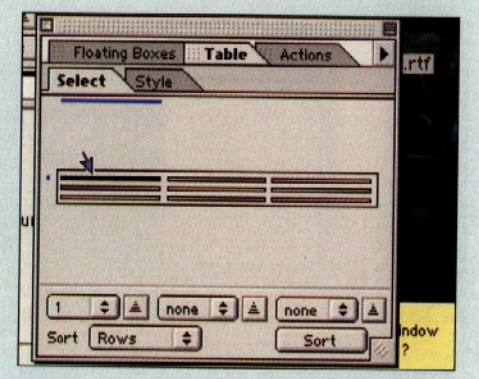
2 Selecting a table style

The new range of table styles in GoLive 5 can be accessed by clicking the 'Table' tab in the floating palette at the bottom of your screen. Click the 'Style' tab and select a style from the pop-up menu. The appearance will preview in the palette – click 'Apply' when you're happy.



3 Resizing the table

Click the top-left border of the table to select it. A black line will appear around the table to show it is selected, and a 'Table' tab will appear in the 'Inspector' floating palette. In the 'Width' pop-up menu, select 'Percent' and then type '100' into the box and hit the 'Return' key.



4 Making a headline row

To convert the three columns of the top table row into one headline cell, first click the 'Select' tab on the 'Floating Boxes' palette and click on the top left-hand cell. This will bring up the 'Cell' tab in the 'Inspector' floating palette. Type '3' into 'Row Span' and press 'Return'.

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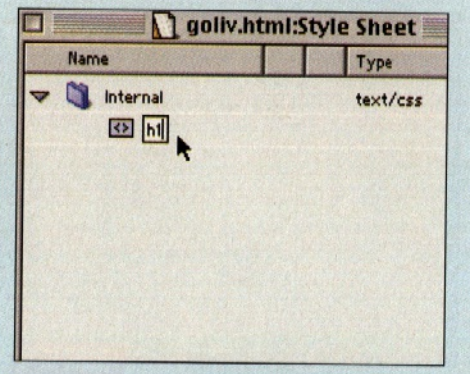
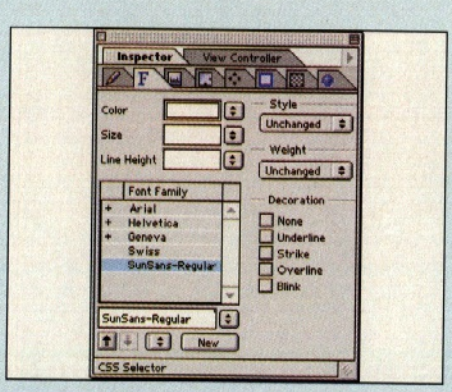
Layout Grid
This is GoLive's way of making life easier for you! Layout grids allow you to place text, images and other page elements exactly where you want them, and with the introduction of the Transform and Align palettes in this version of the software, they're even more useful than before.

Tables
Tables are a standard HTML feature, which allow you to structure the elements on the page into rows and columns. If you want to find out more about how they actually work, refer to the HTML code tutorial over the page.



5 Creating a headline style

Click on the 'Open CSS Interface' button in the top-right of the main GoLive window. Click the '< >' button on the top-left of the screen. This will create a new style in the 'Style Sheet' window. Click on the text that reads 'element', type 'h1' in its place, and press 'Return'.



6 Setting the headline style

In the 'Inspector' palette, click the 'F' tab to enter the font style section. Pick a colour by clicking on the pop-up menu to the right of the 'Colour' box. The pop-up menu to the left of the 'New' button at the bottom of the palette will allow you to select a font face.

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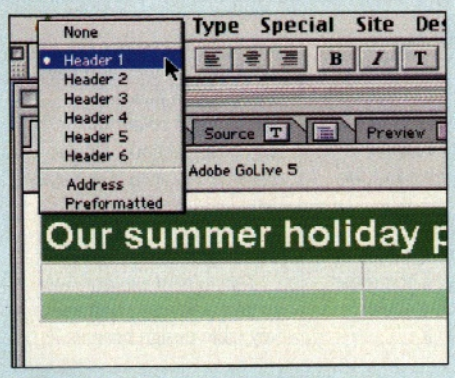
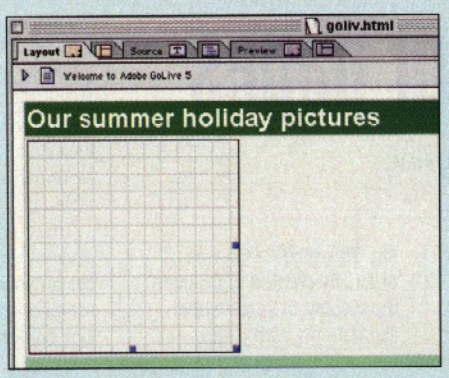


7 Entering a headline

Click in the top-left cell of the table, and GoLive will dismiss the Style window. Type in a headline for the page, and then select 'Header 1' from the pop-up menu at the top-left of the page. The headline should snap into the style you defined in step 6.

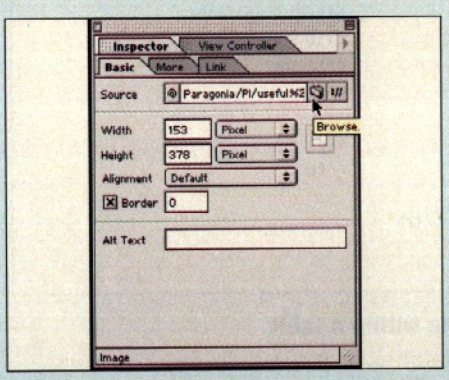


8 Adding a Layout Grid

Click into the row below the headline. In the 'Object' palette, double-click the top-left icon, which will insert a Layout Grid. Double-click within the grid to activate it, and then double-click the Question mark icon in the 'Object' palette to insert an image.

TOP TIP!

If you go wrong whilst using GoLive 5, you can easily undo mistakes with one click of the mouse. Open the 'Actions' palette via the 'Windows' menu, and you'll see a 'History' list of recent commands. To undo, click on the command above the one(s) you want to undo.



9 Inserting images

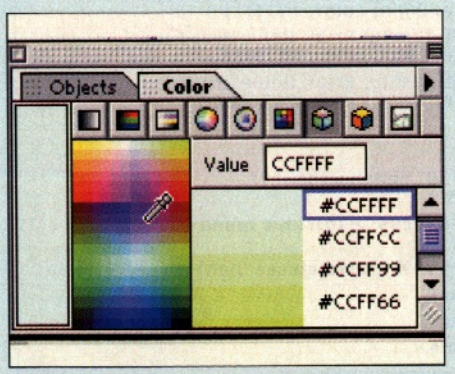
Click the folder button to the right of 'Source'. In the dialog box that appears, locate a graphic on your hard drive. Click 'Open' to load the image. Repeat this so you have at least two images (preferably more) in the layout grid.

10 Transforming the images

Select all the images in the grid, by clicking once on each whilst holding down the Shift key. They should all have blue handle edges. In the 'Transform' palette, click the 'Constrain Proportions' checkbox. Type '200' in the second 'Size' box and press 'Return'.

11 Aligning the images

Click the 'Align' tab, then an alignment button underneath the 'Align Objects' heading. Click the third button from the right under 'Align to Parent' to make the images move to the top of the Layout Grid. Click in the Layout Grid, and click 'Optimize' in the 'Inspector' palette.



12 Colouring a table cell

We now have space in the other table cells to add other images or text. To change the colour of the cell background, just click the border of the cell to highlight it, then click the box to the right of 'Colour' in the 'Inspector' palette. Then select a colour.

13 Previewing the page

To see what the finished Web page will look like, click the 'Show In Browser' button at the top of the screen. You'll be prompted to specify a default browser – click 'Specify' and then 'Find All'. Select one from the list that appears, and your page will be loaded into the browser.

ONLINE RESOURCES

Adobe
www.adobe.co.uk
The home page of Adobe, makers of GoLive and many other excellent programs. Come here for more information about GoLive 5, or buy some products from the online shop.

GoLive Heaven
www.goliveheaven.com
All sorts of treats and pieces of information for users of GoLive.

GoLive 5 History Palette
http://216.246.51.202/articles/grillo_lynn/history_palette
Lynn Grillo spouts her words of wisdom concerning the History Palette in GoLive 5.

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Add tables to your pages

How to: Design entire Web pages by using HTML tables as a flexible framework

HOME IMPROVEMENT

WITHOUT A DOUBT, one of the most useful design elements that's available to the Web builder is the <table> tag. This <table> tag was originally created to facilitate the display of spreadsheet-like data on Web pages. As time went by, the tag gradually grew in function. Eventually, it became possible for Web page builders to base their entire page designs around inventive uses of the table tag.

There are quite a few advantages in using tables to design your pages. The most useful ones are that tables lock content into a controllable grid of rows and columns and they also have the ability to give a background colour to particular sections. It's also possible to create a versatile template for all the pages of your site just by designing one table.

This tutorial explains how to take advantage of these key table design benefits.

START HERE

```
<html><head><title>Whole page table</title></head>
<body bgcolor="#FFFFFF">
        <table width="100%" border="1"
cellspacing="0" cellpadding="2">
                <tr>
                <td align="center" width="165">
                </td>
                <th align="center">
                </th>
                </tr>
                <tr>
                <td align="center">
                </td>
                <td>
                </td>
                </tr>
                </table>
</body>
</html>
```

1 Creating the table framework

The code above shows how to create the basic outline for a Web page containing a table of two rows and two columns. Rows come first in the code and are defined using the TR tag. Columns are built using Table Header (TH) and Table Data (TD) tags, which contain the actual text and graphics. The number of TH/TD tags defines the number of columns, and it's important to make sure every row in the table has the same number of columns.

```
                <tr>
                <td align="center">
                <table border="0" cellspacing="1"
cellpadding="3">
                <tr><td>Links menu heading</td></tr>
                        <tr><td>
                        Menu item 1<br>
                        Menu item 2<br>
                        </td></tr>
                        </table>
                        </td>

                        <td>
                        </td>

                </tr>
```

2 Nesting a table within a table

This is an expansion of the second TR tag from step one. It demonstrates how to make a table within a table. This is going to be used to make a 'menu' on the left-hand side of the page that contains lists of links, each visually distinct from the other by coloured headings. Cellspacing is the number of pixels' blank space the browser should leave between each part of a table (known as a cell). Cellpadding is the blank space to leave within each cell.

```
<style type="text/css">
<!- - //
TH        { font-family: Arial, Helvetica, sans-
serif; font-size: 24px; color: #FFFFFF }
TD        { font-family: Arial, Helvetica, sans-
serif; font-size: 10px; color: #FFFFFF }
TD.light  { font-family: Arial, Helvetica, sans-
serif; font-size: 10px; color: #000066 }
// - ->
</style>
<table border="0" cellspacing="1"
cellpadding="3">
<tr bgcolor="#000099"><td>Links menu
heading</td></tr>
<tr bgcolor="#9999CC"><td class="light">
Menu item 1<br>
Menu item 2<br>
</td></tr></table>
```

3 Adding colour and style

The <style> tag is a simple style sheet placed before the </head> tag. It sets some default font sizes, colours and faces for the TH and TD cells of all tables in the document. The third style definition, TD.light, will only be used where class="light" is added to the <td> tag. The <table> code snippet shows this and demonstrates how background colours are set for entire rows (TR) or individual cells (TD) using 'bgcolor' and a hex colour code.

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BGCOLOR
This is a property that can be attributed to the TABLE, TR, TH or TD tags. It normally takes the form of bgcolor="#000066", ie uses a hexadecimal colour code to specify the colour. It can also use the notation bgcolor="yellow", ie using one of the recognised colour names instead.

Properties
An HTML tag can contain numerous properties. They are the individual sections of the tag that define what it does to the appearance of the Web page. For instance, <td align="center" bgcolor="blue"> is a TD tag with two properties, ALIGN and BGCOLOR.

ONLINE RESOURCES

HTML Goodies Tables
http://htmlgoodies.earthweb.com/tutors/tbl.html

W3 Consortium HTML Reference
www.w3.org/TR/html4

Web Monkey Tables
http://hotwired.lycos.com/webmonkey/authoring/tables

About HTML
http://html.about.com

Colour codes and names
www.lynda.com/hex.html

Ben's Planet
www.bensplanet.com

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http://webfusion.co.uk

TOP TIP!

! Confused by the style sheet code? It is part of the flexible Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) system that is a great help with all aspect of Web page design. Take a look at the range of tutorials available at http://hotwired.lycos.com/webmonkey/authoring/stylesheets.

! Careful with your table alignment instructions. If you're setting a horizontal alignment (ie using the ALIGN property), the options are left, center, right and justify. The vertical alignment (VALIGN) options are top, middle and bottom. If you mix these up you're likely to get undesirable results...

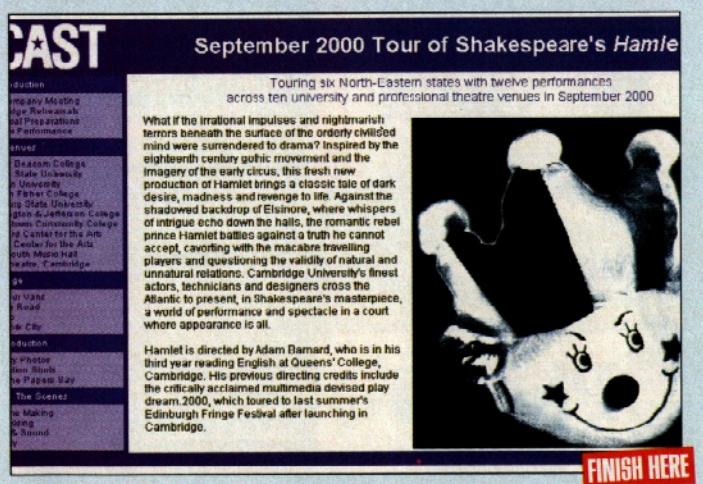
```
</table>
</td>

<td bgcolor="#FFFFFF" class="light">
Main content goes here
</td>
<td bgcolor="#000066"> </td>
</tr>

<tr>
<td bgcolor="#000066" colspan="3"> </td>
</tr>
```

4 Main page content and minor adjustments

This starts at the end of the 'table within a table' set up in step two, and shows where the main content goes. Some extra code has been added to provide a neat box appearance to the edge of the table. This involves adding a third column and row to the table, empty apart from a background colour and an empty space ( ). You also need to enter the code <td bgcolor="#000066"> </td> after the </th> tag at the top.



5 The finished product

The screenshot here shows a developed version of the code in this tutorial. This has come from adding text and images – there are no changes to the basic stylesheet framework or the table HTML code at all. This page can be viewed at **www.cubeb.co.uk/cast/tableeg.html**. This is currently being developed into a section of the **www.castonline.org** Web site, using the template as the basis around which other design elements will fit in.

WHOLE PAGE TABLES IN ACTION

HAVE A LITTLE LOOK-SEE AT HOW TALENTED WEB SITE DESIGNERS OUT THERE MANAGE TO DESIGN AROUND A TABLE TEMPLATE

BBC News

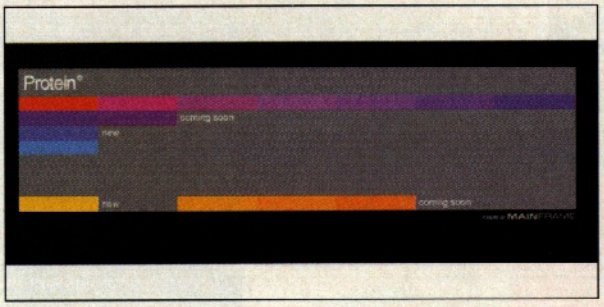
www.bbc.co.uk/news

This uses tables throughout every page of its site, helping to present a large amount of information in a small amount of space. Pages are generated from a database of news stories, with a variety of standard table and page designs being combined with specific news items, making sure every page features the latest headlines.

SceneOne

www.sceneone.co.uk

Of the three sites shown here, this is most similar to the table example we've been working through in the tutorial. It too has made extensive use of table background colours and also has a menu down the left-hand side of the page. The rounded corners of the table are made using a small graphic rather than HTML code.



ProteinOS

www.proteinos.com

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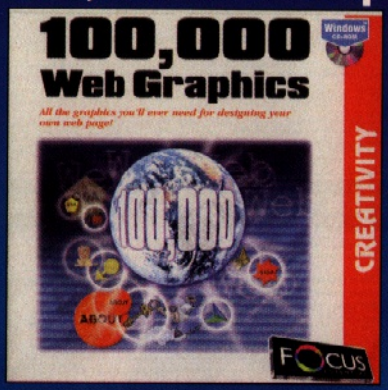

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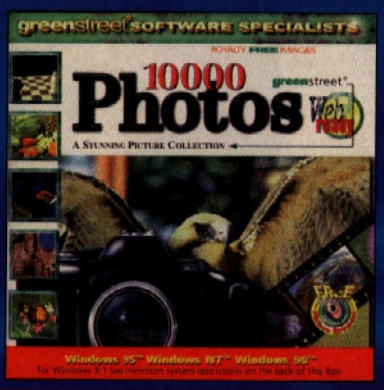

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Q&A

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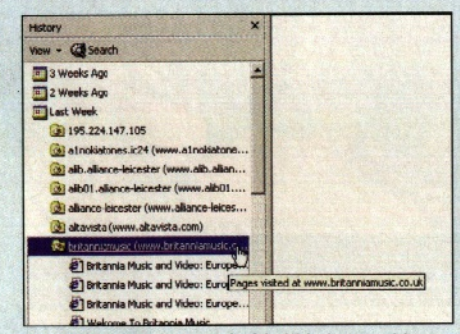
FINDERS' KEEPERS

I'm new to using the Internet and the World Wide Web. In Internet Explorer 5.5, how can I go back to pages I have recently viewed in the Web browser?

Nicola Stall



The History sidebar keeps track of the Web sites you visit

It's quite easy to find pages you've recently visited in Internet Explorer 5. There are several ways to find Web sites and pages you've viewed in the last few days, hours or even minutes. The best method is to use the History function by clicking on the 'History' button in the toolbar of Internet Explorer 5. To find a page you've visited in the last few days, click the 'History' button and wait for the History sidebar to open on the left of Internet Explorer 5.5. The History sidebar contains links to any Web sites and Web pages you have visited in previous days and weeks displayed as folders and files labelled with the number of weeks and days you visited them. Click on a week and it will display a list of Web sites. Click on a Web site and it will display a list of Web pages. Click on a Web page and it is downloaded and displayed. To close the History sidebar, click on the 'History' icon again.

BAD INSTALLATION

A few weeks ago I installed IE 5.5 from the *Practical Internet* CD. I have a Time PC and at that point was running Windows 98 and my Internet service provider was Supanet. After installing Internet Explorer 5.5, I logged on and received several emails then went offline. After reading my email I answered two of them, but when I tried to send them I hit trouble.

I could not connect to the mail server because of a POP3 error. Realising that my settings had been corrupted, I obtained them from the Supanet site using another computer. Thinking that the problem was solved, I tried to send my email only to receive the message 'MSOE.dll not found.' So off I went to another computer and downloaded the file from a .DLL archive site. Next, I got the error message 'MSOE.dll can not be loaded' At this point I thought I would try to log on to the Internet, but although the dial-up connection worked okay, a 'page unavailable – refresh' error was received. The same message was received whatever Web address was typed in. I then installed Netscape Communicator and successfully managed to connect to the Web.

At this point I asked someone in my company's computer department for advice and they said there was a problem with Internet Explorer 5.5. Apparently it was installed on two PCs belonging to some of the directors, and the IT staff had to reformat the hard drives to recover from the problem. I did not want to lose my data so I went to PC World and asked their advice. They advised that I could probably recover from this by upgrading to Windows Millennium. I did this and to my amazement it worked, although I had to first remove my old ISP (Supanet) and sign up with Freeserve.

Internet Explorer 5.5 works perfectly with Windows Me. In fact, Internet Explorer 5.5 comes with Windows Me as standard

I only installed IE 5.5 because it said it was the latest and most advanced Web browser, with hindsight I wish I had left well alone. Is there a problem with the version of Internet Explorer 5.5 supplied with your magazine or is it just coincidence that three people from the same company had similar problems with Internet Explorer 5.5 from at least two different sources? From now on if it works I intend to leave it alone.

Jim Williamson

There is nothing wrong with the version of Internet Explorer 5.5 on the *Practical Internet* cover CD, I actually used the CD to upgrade my Windows 98 PC. I've checked though the Microsoft knowledge base to see if the problems you describe have been reported but there is nothing listed there with the same symptoms. Usually when a problem such as this crops up, you should use the Repair Internet Explorer option in the Add/Remove Programs control panel as your first step. If that doesn't work, you should uninstall the latest version of Internet Explorer 5.5 and revert to the previous version, then reinstall the browser from scratch. This should fix the damaged/missing DLL file which looks a though it's actually an Outlook Express file.

As to the advise from your IT department, it seems a little drastic to format a hard drive when the browser installation hasn't worked properly. I can think of no reason to format a hard drive in these circumstances. And as for PC World, it has managed to make a sale when it

ARE MACS SENSIBLE CHOICES FOR THE WEB?

My husband has recommended that I buy a Windows PC for use at home for graphic design and for Internet access, but I would like an Apple iMac because that's what I use for my training course at college. He says that I can't access most of the Internet using an iMac and that there's no software available for Apple Mac computers. Is he right?

Fiona Norton

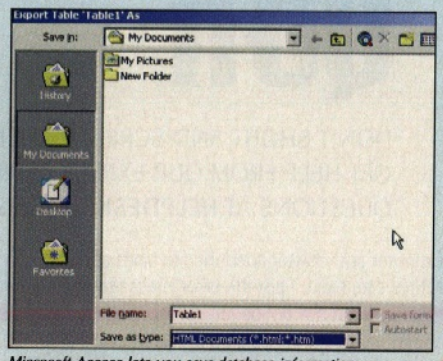
Apple Macintosh computers are as capable of accessing the Internet as any Windows based PC and is usually easier to set up, too. And you can rest assured that an iMac will be able to run professional graphic design software, although I would recommend an Apple G4 tower for serious work because it is easily expandable. Most professional design companies still use Apple computers so you won't be left out if you do settle for an iMac. Finally, there are versions of Internet Explorer 5 and Netscape Communicator 4.75 available for the MacOS, so you can browse the Web with ease.

recommended Windows Me – which is very good – and it has also persuaded you to use its own Internet service provider, Freeserve. There's no reason why you should have to give up your existing service provider when you upgrade to Windows Me, all your existing settings should have been retained automatically. If you're happy with Freeserve then by all means continue to use it, but if people use your old Supanet address to contact you, install that too.

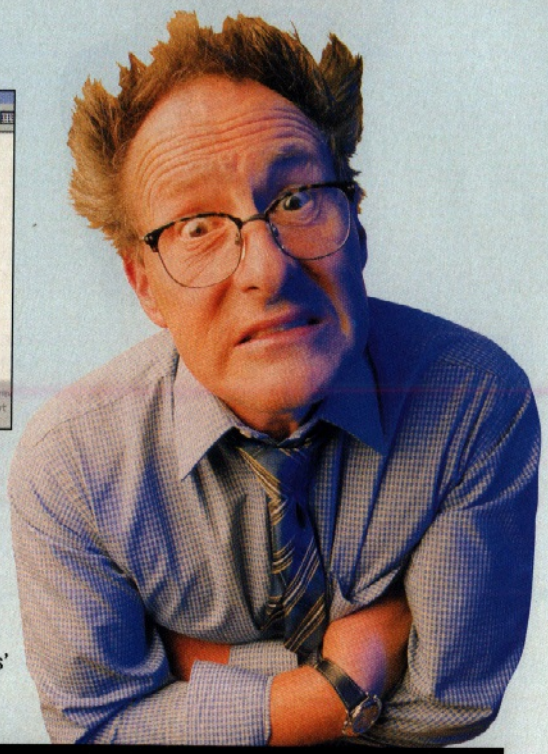
CREATING A WEB DATABASE

I'm interested in making a simple database available to visitors of a Web site I'm about to build – can you advise an easy route and cheap way to achieve this for a relative novice, please?
Geoff Slyfeld

There's really no simple way to make an interactive database available on the Web for a novice. Interaction with data files requires some CGI/PERL or other scripting expertise and you will need to have PERL, ASP or some other database compliant software running on the web server. However, if you just want to make the complete set of data available, you can let users download the actual database file or you can export the data as HTML data by using the Export command and choosing 'Web Documents' as the file format in the Save as Type menu in



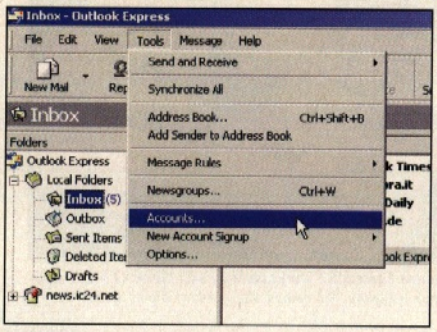
Microsoft Access lets you save database information as Web content



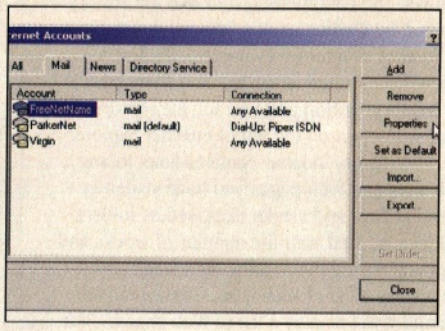
HOW CAN I USE TWO ISPS AND STILL ACCESS EMAIL?

Can you help me? I have Freeserve installed and I wanted to install Freenetname alongside it. But once I had installed Freenetname I couldn't access my mail from Freeserve because although it opened as Freeserve, Freenetname overrode the mail settings and an error message came up telling me to access email with the Freenetname details. In *Practical Internet* 37 you explained how to make a particular connection the default one, I have tried this but the only way I seem to be able to get my mail from Freeserve is to delete the mail settings for Freenetname. Is there something else I can do so I can keep both lots of settings intact?
Barbara Shepherd

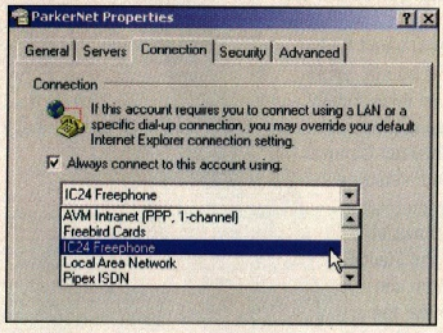
Many service providers let you collect your POP3 email from them using any connection. This is fine if you want to collect your personal email from work or collect your email from one service provider while connected to another. Unfortunately, both Freeserve and Freenetname require you to be connected using their connection in order to send and receive email. This means that to collect your Freeserve email you must be connected to Freeserve and to collect your Freenetname email you must be connected to Freenetname. Both sets of dial-up connections should be stored on your PC. Go to the 'My Computer' icon and double-click on it, then double-click on the 'Dial-Up Networking' folder. Inside you should see both sets of dial-up connections. Right-click on the 'Freeserve' connection and select 'Create Shortcut', then save it to the desktop. Repeat for the Freenetname connection. Now follow the steps below.



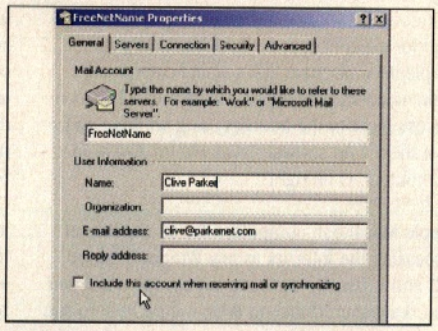
1 *In Outlook Express, go to the 'Tools' menu and select the 'Accounts' command.*



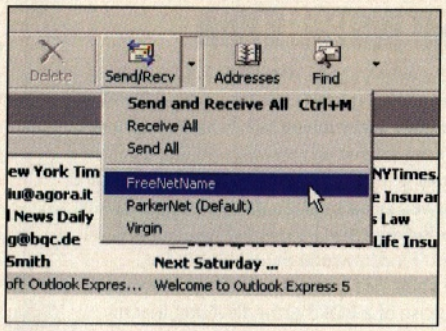
2 *In the Internet Accounts window, click on the 'Freenetname' account to select it and then click the 'Properties' bution.*



3 *Click on the 'Connection' tab and choose the Freenetname connection from the drop-down menu. Make sure that the 'Always connect to this account using' checkbox is selected.*



4 *Click the 'General' tab and make sure that the 'Include this account when receiving mail or synchronizing' checkbox is not selected. Click 'OK' to exit. Repeat for the Freeserve account.*



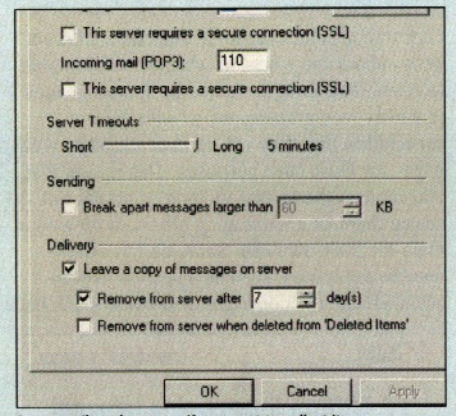
5 *Double-click on the Freenetname shortcut. In Outlook Express, click on the small arrow and choose 'Freenetname'. This will send and receive Freenetname email only. Disconnect from Freenetname and do the same for Freeserve.*

Microsoft Access or the equivalent command in the database software you are using.

I WANT TO COLLECT MY EMAIL ON TWO PCS

I want to collect my email using two different PCs, one is a laptop and the other is a desktop PC at home. The problem is that when I download my email on one PC I can't download it on the other one. Is there any way I can keep them synchronized?

Dave D'Reheetar



Leave mail on the server if you want to collect it on more than one PC

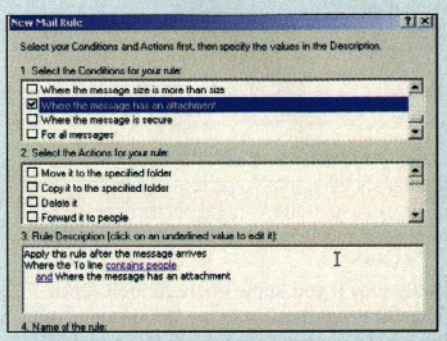
It's not a difficult task Dave. All you have to do is make sure that both your PCs are set up to leave mail on the server after you collect it. By doing this you can download the same emails to both PCs and keep them nicely synched. In Outlook Express, go to the 'Tools' menu and select 'Accounts'. Select your mail account and then click 'Properties'. Click on the 'Advanced' tab and then select the 'Leave a copy of messages on the server' option. I normally leave mail on the server for between 7 and 14 days or even longer if I'm away on a trip. Repeat the process on your other PC.

JUNK IT

I keep getting email that's not for me, even though I have my own domain name. It looks as though the email is for a company or business with a domain name similar to mine. What should I do with this email, some messages have large file attachments with them that take ages to download? I'm now getting dozens of these emails every week.

Simon Campbell

If the mail isn't intended for you, then you can just delete it, it's not your fault that people can't find the right email address. But this doesn't solve the problems of the attachments. Outlook's mail rules section does have a 'Do not download from the server' option but it only



You can block unwanted mail or simply delete it

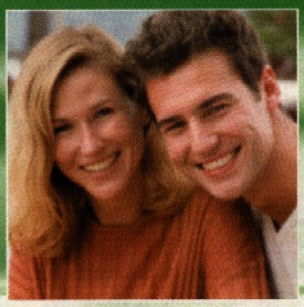
runs after messages have arrived. If the emails coming to you all have the same address in the To: field you could ask your service provider to block any emails sent to that specific address. Alternatively, if the attachments are your main concern, you can set a rule to block attachments over a certain size or block them completely. Go to the 'Tools' menu of Outlook Express, choose the 'Message Rules' command and then select 'Mail'. Experiment until you find the rules with the best effect.

SEARCHING QUESTIONS

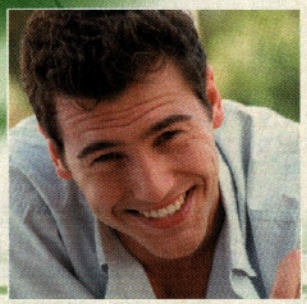
I've got Internet Explorer 5.5 and I'm getting pretty fed up with the autocomplete feature. In most cases it's fine, but when I type in a domain

"Your matching was right on! We were the number one match for each other on udate and it seems in real life too."

"I'm happy to tell you I have met the man of my dreams."



"Thank you udate for helping to make this happen... I have met my soulmate after searching for years."



"I have been with udate for less than a month and already have too many women to write to and meet."

(they just clicked)

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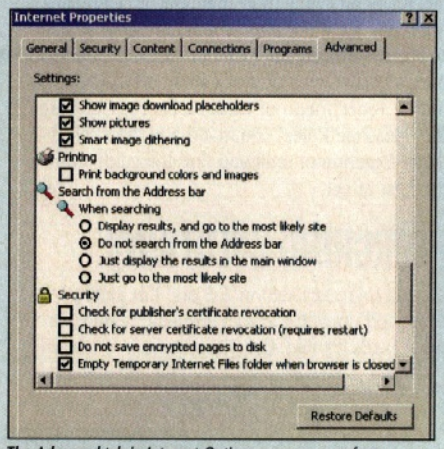
name that doesn't start with the traditional 'www' the bloody thing tries to perform a search instead of connecting to the Web site. Is there any way of turning off this feature?
Tom Sawyer

Pretty easy if you know where to look. Open 'Internet Properties' from the 'Tools' menu of Internet Explorer 5.5 and select the 'Advanced' tab. Scroll down until you find the Search section and then select the 'Do not search from the Address bar' radio button. Click 'OK' and you will never be annoyed by this feature again.



The Advanced tab in Internet Options can save you from annoying Internet Explorer 5.5 'features' you'd rather not have

CAN'T SEND

I've set up my email details on a friend's PC so I can collect my mail when I am at his house. The problem is that I can collect my email without any hassle, but I always get an error message when I try to send an email. It says that I don't have permission to send, or something. But my friend can send and receive using the same copy of Outlook Express 5 on the same PC. I have a Freeserve account and my friend uses VirginNet.
Peter Stevens

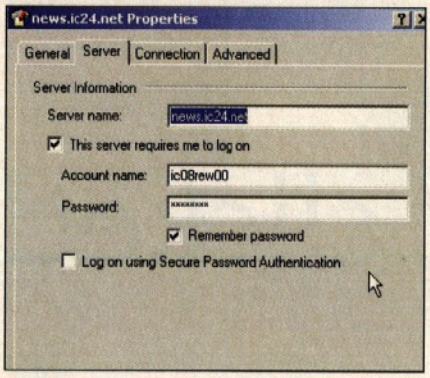
Your very last sentence supplies the reason for your problem. I'm assuming that you are connecting to the Internet using VirginNet at your friend's house when you collect your mail from Freeserve. While you can usually log onto the Internet and download your email using any dial-up connection with any Internet service provider, you can only send email through Freeserve's SMTP (Simple Mail Transfer Protocol) mail server if you have actually dialled into a Freeserve account. This doesn't actually mean that you have to set up Freeserve on your friend's PC. All you have to do is change your account details on his PC so your Freeserve account sends mail using the VirginNet SMTP mail server.

Go to the 'Tools' menu of Outlook Express 5 and select the 'Accounts' command. Highlight your friend's VirginNet account and click on the 'Properties' button. Click on the 'Server' tab and write down the details in the Outgoing Mail (SMTP): field, it should be something like smtp.virgin.net. Now close the dialog, highlight your Freeserve account and click the 'Properties' button. Click on the 'Server' tab and replace the existing Freeserve Outgoing Mail (SMTP): server address with the VirginNet details. Close the Properties dialog then close the Accounts dialog. You should now be able to send your Freeserve email through your friend's VirginNet account.

I WANT NEWSGROUP ACCESS WITH MY IC24 ACCOUNT

I've got a problem with my ic24 account. I can connect okay, and I can send and receive email, but I have been unable to access newsgroups. I know I have the server name correct – news.ic24.net – but I just get an error message saying that I don't have permission to access it. How can I get onto the ic24 newsgroups?
Derek Tedder

Unlike most service providers, the ic24 news server requires you to enter your username and password before you can access newsgroups. It's the same username and password as your email account, so it's easy to set up. Go to the 'Tools' menu of Outlook Express and select 'Accounts'. Click on the 'News' tab in the Internet Accounts window, select the ic24 account and click on 'Properties'. When the control panel opens click on the Server tab and select the checkbox labelled 'This server requires me to log on' and then enter your ic24 username and password in the boxes. Select the 'Remember Password' box and then click on the 'OK' button. You can now access ic24 newsgroups.



1 *Go to the 'Tools' menu of Outlook Express, select 'Accounts' then click on the 'News' tab in the Internet Accounts window. Select the ic24 acount and click 'Properties' to get to the above screen*

Site building Q&A

JAMES SEABRIGHT ANSWERS SITE BUILDING QUERIES. EMAIL HIM AT JAMES@PARAGON.CO.UK

COPYRIGHTS AND WRONGS

You often suggest resource sites that provide free animations and graphics. However for most of them the question of copyright remains – can I really use those images on my site? Also, is it okay if I send you my URL so that you can make some recommendations on how to improve my site?
Abdun Nizar Ahmad

Each free graphics resource site has a different policy about the extent to which it is acceptable to reuse their images. Generally speaking, sites that offer free graphics do so with the expectation that they will be used on other Web pages for illustrative purposes. This means that you can use the images as long as you're not selling them or encouraging others to download them for their own use. Some do have more specific guidelines, such as a requirement to acknowledge the copyright or provide a link back

*Some clip art graphics sites, such as **www.arttoday.com**, require a copyright acknowledgement to appear if you use their images on your Web page*

to their site. Check the small print on the site if you're in any doubt. As for getting design advice – the Design Doctor is always to take on new patients, see below for more information!

MUSIC TO YOUR ERRORS

I created a Web site with MP3 so that users can click and listen to songs. Once I uploaded my Web site the MP3s no longer work and when clicked-on I get the message "The requested URL was not found on this server". The MP3 files are on the Web server but I guess there must be a connection problem. Any idea what it could be? My site is at http://users.tinyworld.co.uk/acidstings1.
Acid Stings

The error that you describe is also known as a "404" (www.plinko.net/404), which means that the requested file name is not found on the server. This could well be due to a tiny spelling or typographical mistake – if it's happening with all your MP3 files, maybe the file extension has been consistently mistyped. Remember that most Web servers are case sensitive – so

mytunez.mp3 is considered a different file from mytunez.MP3 or Mytunez.mp3.

Other common reasons for getting 404 errors include accidentally uploading files into the incorrect directory on the server, or linking to the wrong directory. This is quite easily done, so it pays to check the exact URL that appears in the Web browser's Location bar when the 'File not found' error message appears. Compare this carefully with the HTML code of the page.

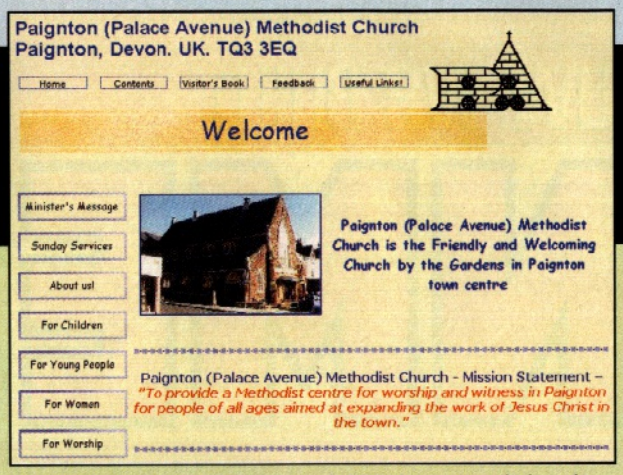
Also look through the HTML to see whether there are any <base href> tags which can set a new default directory for files linked on a particular Web page. For instance, <base href=http://www.somewhere.net/images/> would make the Web browser look for all linked images and pages at that Web address. This means that clicking on the link created by the code My Cat would lead to the Web browser looking at http://www.somewhere.net/images/mycat.html for the page.

THUMBNAIL THERAPY

I have a responsibility for our church Web site at **www.palaceavenue-methodist.org.uk** and also our Circuit Web site at **www.torbay-methodists.org.uk**. I'm endeavouring to increase the number of photographs on each site, but as they can take a long time to download I want to provide thumbnails with links to the main picture. Is there a program that can help?

David Wotton

Practical Internet Issue 45 featured a tutorial on the excellent US$39.99 (£25) shareware product **Al Picture Explorer**. You can download a trial version from the publisher's Web site at **http://members.aol.com/aipict**. This software package can convert any quantity of images into thumbnail galleries based on a template, making it easy to turn large collections of images into a series of Web pages in just a few minutes. If you're working with smaller numbers of images that need more individual attention, it might be worth investigating the macro facilities of your conventional graphics package.



David Wotton's Web sites are in desperate need of divine intervention in the form of a software package to create top-notch thumbnails

FLASH IN THE PAN

I have had a Flash logo created for me. Try as I might, I cannot get it to display on my Web site at **www.cwuplymouth.eurobell.co.uk**. I have tried placing it as an image. I have tried to copy and paste it into coded page, but all to no avail. I know it works as if I open it locally it looks superb animated and eye catching.

Jeff Thomas

In order to display a Flash movie correctly, you have to use quite different HTML code from that for an image. This is normally generated by the Flash software on exporting the movie, but I presume that the person who provided you with the Flash file did not include the necessary code. Here's a basic template to work from: <embed src="logo.swf" pluginspage="http://www.macromedia.com/shockwave/download/" type="application/x-shockwave-flash" width="" height="" loop="false" quality="high"></embed>. The code provided by the Flash software is a little more complicated, but the method shown here should work with all browsers that have the Flash plug-in installed.

DESIGN DOCTOR

IF YOU WOULD LIKE THE DESIGN DOCTOR TO DIAGNOSE PROBLEMS WITH YOUR SITE'S DESIGN, EMAIL **JAMES@PARAGON.CO.UK** WITH THE URL. YOUR PRESCRIPTION MAY WELL APPEAR ON THESE PAGES IN A FUTURE ISSUE

BAPTIST SURFER

www.angelfire.com/zine/baptistsurfer

Christians in need of online religious enrichment need look no further than this content and link-packed site, which boasts multimedia features such as links to Net radio stations. Although there's plenty of information to be found on the site, it could be a lot better presented with a little work. Thankfully, the Design Doctor is well equipped to handle this all-too-familiar problem and has identified three key issues to work on.

PICTURE IMPERFECT

The front page boasts two vastly oversized images. Remember that pages should be under 600 pixels wide to avoid forcing the user to scroll horizontally to see everything. It would also make sense to use a small version of the site logo on every page, to both tighten up site identity and provide a clickable link back to the front page.

PICTURE IMPERFECT

The site's extensive contents are not broken up in any logical way. Three huge links on the front page lead the user to some information, although a whole lot more appear further down the front page. These could easily be spun off onto separate pages, which would also speed up the loading time of the front page considerably.

LOGICAL PROGRESSION

It always pays to choose a couple of font styles and then to use them loyally throughout a site. Baptist Surfer has gone for the more eclectic option of using various different text styles throughout. Perhaps the worst sin of all is the random use of bold text in the middle of sentences. Also underlining should be avoided unless it's for a link.

HOW WE BUILT NEW MUSICAL EXPRESS NME.COM

Completely overhauling the largest music Web site in Europe was a surprisingly stress-free move for the NME.com team, as **Thomas Watson** saw

The NME site has undergone a radical redesign, with a much improved graphical look

The new home page, with its much simpler style

Some people are never happy. Not content with having the biggest and most popular music site in Europe, NME.com also insisted on completely revamping the whole kit and kiboodle, from top to bottom.

So why, you might ask, did the Web musos choose to do such a thing? Well, there were two reasons. Firstly, Anthony Thornton arrived as Editor in late 1998, and immediately set his stall out for change. In effect, the wholesale changes you see today are down to him.

Secondly, "the original site was built in 1996," explains Anthony Thornton. "The technology that built it might have been novel and innovative at the time, but was starting to creak – we had been pushing it to the limit for some time."

To the team at NME.com, these technological advancements to the site are manifest in one word – databases. Anything you see in the new site is just a tiny part of one of many huge databases. It's difficult to describe just how huge these databases are, or how many there are. Suffice to say that there are 150,000 artists, each with their own page, containing all of the news and reviews based on that artist. Each minute element is a unique part of a database. "Stuff on the site is no longer HTML-based – everything is entered into the database, which makes it searchable in any way we want," says Anthony Thornton.

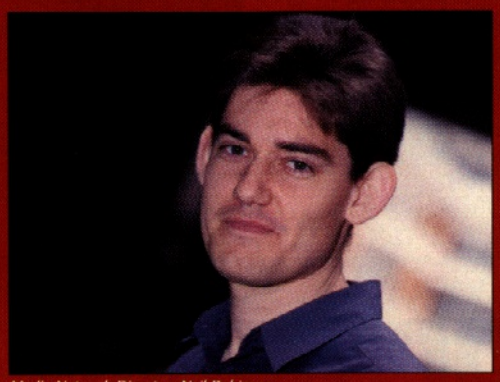
Search and find

It's the searchability of the site that has been altered the most, as far as the team are concerned. Whereas your traditional Web experience involves you going hunting for information, Anthony and his team of Web music specialists have tried to do something

Special 'microsites' based around the world's biggest stars are an integral part of the site

TIME SCALE

- June 1996 – NME.com launched
- Nov 1998 – Anthony Thornton joins team as Editor, and immediately sets about planning changes to the site
- March 1999 – Slight redesign of NME.com
- Oct 1999 – First UK site to Webcast a gig – Suede live in Japan
- Jan 2000 – NME.com broadcasts all 25 bands at the NME Premier Shows
- April 2000 – Plans for the redesign are complete, and the work begins
- Oct 2000 – The redesigned NME.com is uploaded, bigger and better than ever before



Media Network Director, Neil Robinson

NME.com Editor, Anthony Thornton

a bit different. There's a chance that you won't even notice it, but there's this whole new pyramid structure thing in place on the site.

"The ideal of the Web is that everything is never more than one click away. Well, we've not quite managed that, but we think you can do it with two clicks," says Neil Robinson, Media Network Director. The wonderful tool that makes all of this possible is the fact that the there are home pages at every level of this pyramid. Apart from the main home page, you've also got 'genre' home pages, and even each of the artist pages can act as the entry point to the site.

The reason behind this is simple. "If a bloke emails his mate with news of a Madonna story," says Anthony Thornton, "he'll start off at the Madonna page. This might be the only chance we get to keep them." Visit the Madonna page at NME.com, and you could conceivably believe that it was a the home page of a distinct site.

A genre unto itself

Each of the genres is treated autonomously, and has its own team of dedicated writers and editors. This allows only the people in the know to write about any particular style of music – sharing their passion and knowledge with a waiting worldwide audience. Each of the editors has his fair share of connections within the genre, so you don't find an Altered Images devotee trying to convince everyone that he's an expert in the beautiful warblings of Placebo's Brian Molko.

With some 150,000 artists kicking about on the database, the boys have had to be rather selective in just how much detail they can go into with each one. That's why your Madonnas and Radioheads are furnished with multi-page extravaganzas, while fans of The Wurzels have to be satisfied with a couple of pages devoted. Having said that, the team at NME.com are trying to expand the site constantly, updating each group's information with reviews that have appeared in the paper format. "With so many artists to get through," says Anthony Thornton, "we're writing the history of rock'n'roll. It's a tough job." ■

The old-style NME.com home page

Individual artist pages act as entry points to the site

Each artist page has news, reviews and information

SITE STATS

The site
NME.com www.nme.com

Who designed it?
In-house

How many people were involved?
32

Time taken?
Six months

Software used?
In-house content manager

Number of pages?
Millions

Page impressions?
1.3 million unique users a month

hardware on test

BEFORE YOU BUY ANY EXTRAS FOR YOUR PC, READ OUR HARDWARE REVIEW SECTION TO SORT THE TURKEYS FROM THE MUST-HAVES

Hardware

WEBCAMS 96
Five reviews of Webcams

UMAX SCANNER 100
This great scanner even uploads your ohotos

ONNET FROM ONDIGITAL 100
Browse the Internet from your TV

PULSE 415 100
Labtec produces another lovely set of speakers

CANON DIGITAL IXUS 103
A very small digicam indeed

RADEON CARD 103
Boost your Net gaming with this graphics card

ACER CRW 1032A 103
A super-speedy CD writer is ever there was one

Software

NET FILTERS 105
Keep your kids safe with filtering software

PAINT SHOP PRO 7 108
Possibly the greatest graphics package... ever

MCAFEE QUICKCLEAN 109
Give your PC an early spring clean

SERIF PHOTOPLUS 6 109
An excellent budget graphics package

Books

ADOBE LIVEMOTION 105
A handy book for LiveMotion users

WHICH? GUIDE TO THE NET 108
Which? provides a thorough guide to the Internet

SHOPPING ON THE INTERNET 109
The beeb's guide to shopping online

THE WAR OF THE WORLDS 111
Classic literature eBook

Net Gamer

SUDDEN STRIKE 113
One of the best RTS games on the market

AIRFIX DOGFIGHTER 113
Air adventures await with this flight sim

THE SIMS – LIVIN' IT UP 113
Another chance to get sucked in a virtual world

Practical internet BEST BUY ★★★★★

Look out for our Best Buy logo. This cherished accolade only goes to the highest-scoring products

WEBCAMS ON TEST

Give a PC eyes!

Looking for a clever Christmas gift idea? **Martin Pipe** tests five of the very best value Webcams

They may not have the portability or image quality of a camcorder, but these little PC cameras have their place. Install one, and using a program like CoffeeCup Webcam on our cover CD, you can see – as well as hear – the person you're communicating with.

Given that your correspondent might be on the other side of the world, and that you're only paying – at the most – local-rate call charges, this is quite a powerful concept. The picture quality of those postage stamp-sized images isn't fantastic, thanks largely to Internet congestion and slow data rates. If your connection isn't fast enough for videoconferencing, you could always send a video clip as an email attachment. Most cameras are supplied with 'video email' programs that heavily compress your footage to minimise file sizes.

If you've got a permanent Net connection or unmetered access, you could point the lens outside your window and set up a 'Webcam'. These are popular, and give Net users a view of life in another part of the world. Most of them were captured by gadgets like the ones here, hooked up to an Internet-enabled PC and pointed at the scene of interest.

ONLINE RESOURCES

www.webcamworld.com
Webcam resource site

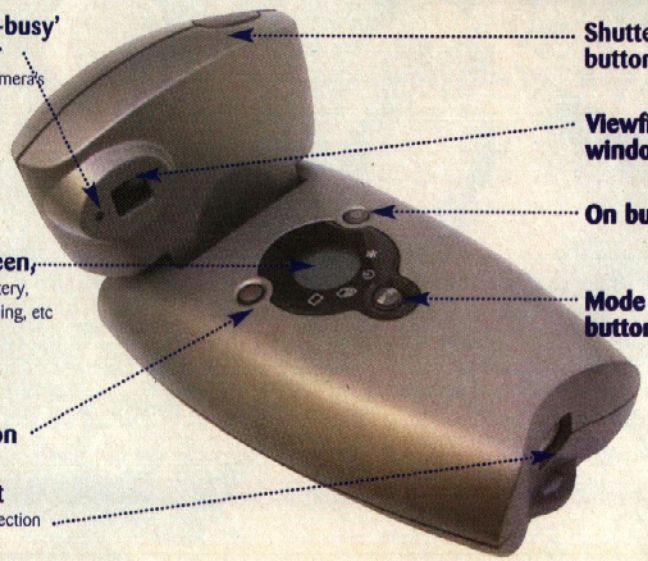
www.spotlife.com
Publish live images online

www.microsoft.com/windows/netmeeting
The home of Microsoft Netmeeting. It's free, and can be downloaded from this site

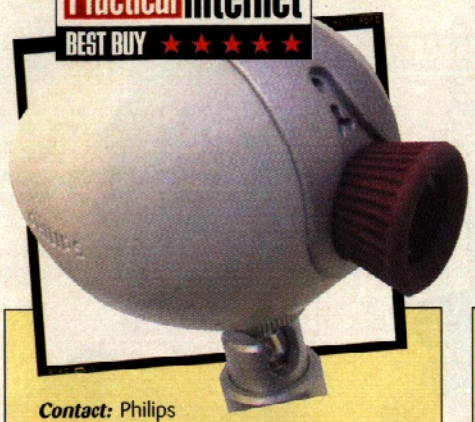
http://surveyorcorp.com/webcam32
Webcam shareware for Windows NT/9x. Go on... put some video on your home page

www.earthcam.com
A comprehensive selection of Webcams from around the world

www.webcamresource.com/
Webcam resources



Practical internet BEST BUY ★★★★★



Contact: Philips
URL: www.pcstuff.philips.com
Phone: (020) 8689 4444
Price: £60-£70 inc VAT

1. Philips Vesta Pro

THIS IS A well-specified and attractive little camera, with a maximum VGA (640 x 480) resolution. If you're working with still images, though, the Windows 98-only Vesta Pro will go up to 800 x 600, thanks to interpolation. Philips has included PageCam, a simple but effective OCR text-reader program sourced from Xerox. Bearing in mind the limits of the camera's resolution, it worked well. The barrel of the lens can be rotated, bringing the subject into sharp focus. This adjustment is critical if good OCR results are to be achieved. Thankfully, the lens has a wide focusing range. Another valuable hardware feature is the built-in microphone. Audio signals from this are transmitted via the camera's USB interface. The Vesta Pro is TWAIN-compliant, and so it can be directly-accessed from any compatible image-editing program. One of these is included, courtesy of Ulead's Photo Express 2.0.

Loose connections

The TWAIN driver provides access to a comprehensive range of adjustments, including backlight compensation, colour temperature, and exposure. You can also mirror the image, switch to black-and-white and compensate for fluorescent light 'flicker'. The refresh rate can be varied between 5 and 30 frames per second, and the resolution adjusted between 128 x 96 ('postage-stamp' SQCIF) and VGA.

Performance? It's difficult to keep the camera trained on a document or subject, because the tripod locking screw has a tendency to work loose. In terms of picture quality, though, the Vesta Pro is excellent. Colours are natural, and contrast range very acceptable. Adjust the controls, and you'll get a fair performance with less-than-ideal lighting conditions.

THE VERDICT

Features	★★★★☆
Ease of use	★★★★☆
Value	★★★★★
Overall	★★★★★

Contact: Pine
URL: www.pinegroup.com
Phone: (01908) 218812
Price: £50 (Officeworld and Lastminute.com)

2. Pinecam Z100

PINE HAS TRIED to make this Windows 98-only camera, which has a maximum VGA resolution, look a little different from the rest. Our sample, resplendent in orange hues, looked like a miniaturised multimedia kiosk of the sort that wouldn't look out of place at the Millennium Dome. And like the Dome, the Z100 is poorly executed. The camera itself fits into a flimsy base unit. This is done via a plastic peg is round and smooth, which allows the camera to swivel around exactly where you don't want it to. Assuming you get that far, its lightweight base has no grip whatsoever. The Z100 didn't stay atop our monitor for long, and a long protruding button on top of the camera snapping off during its fall. To find out what this would have done, we had to access the instruction manual from the CD-ROM. Pine has not even bothered to include the most basic of installation details on paper.

Many problems

Things don't get any better when you install the camera. Following those electronic instructions, the drivers and the software went in without a hitch. Trying to use it was another matter. On most occasions, we got no picture. Removing and replacing the USB plug sometimes got it to work, but after making adjustments the picture would 'freeze' and cause the program to crash. On the few occasions it did work, picture quality was fair. We experienced some patterning, but this could be mostly removed by engaging the '220V/50Hz' checkbox. Other adjustments include brightness, colour saturation and contrast. There's an AGC feature, but it's slow to respond and nearly always results in a picture that's bleached out.

THE VERDICT

Features	★★★☆☆
Ease of use	★☆☆☆☆
Value	★★☆☆☆
Overall	★★☆☆☆

Contact: Logitech
URL: www.logitech.com
Phone: (020) 7309 0127
Price: £59.99

3. Logitech Quickcam Web`

AS WITH OTHER cameras from this stable, the Windows 98/2000-only Quickcam Web is a cutesy spherical object. Also like other cameras, the focus can be tweaked by rotating the lens barrel. A mike is built-in, as is a button for invoking the supplied software. A number of options are available, including still-picture 'snaps', video capture and video email creation. Another option is motion detection, which starts capture if the camera senses movement beyond a user-definable threshold. You can also create video emails, and 'publish' your results on the Web. To make this easy, Logitech has teamed up with Spotlife.com. After setting up an account with the site, you can connect to it with live video. Basic membership provides 240 minutes of streaming per month, and 25 simultaneous viewers.

Not so refreshing

Also included is 15Mb of storage space, into which previously-captured clips can be uploaded for general view. Although the resolution can be manually adjusted, refresh rate cannot. Picture quality is rather average. There are other problems, too. Because the drivers are TWAIN-compliant, you should be able to invoke image capture from any compatible programs. Although the camera's own software worked fine, installation of the Logitech software screwed up our PC's TWAIN functionality. The result was that no compatible devices – camera included – could be accessed by third-party software. After reinstalling everything, we got it to work.

THE VERDICT

Features	★★★☆☆
Ease of use	★★★☆☆
Value	★★★☆☆
Overall	★★★☆☆

Contact: Creative
URL: www.europe.creative.com
Phone: (01245) 265265
Price: £129

4. Creative WebCam Go Plus

THIS WINDOWS 98/2000 device wins full marks for marrying unusual design with excellent performance. The body can be placed securely on a standard ('tubed') monitor, and its hinged camera section angled towards you. The Go Plus is also capable of portable operation. Two AAA batteries, and an internal memory of 8Mb will allow you to capture short video clips, a series of independent still images or a 'voice memo'. The mode required is selected by a single button, and confirmed by a tiny LCD screen. Unfortunately, the exact capture settings for each mode have to be changed via the PC. In addition, video clips aren't accompanied by sound. That internal mike is solely for voice memos.

A range of options

There's no proper LCD display, and so you can't review still images when you're 'in the field'. But then again, the Go Plus doesn't pretend to be a 'proper' digital still camera. It can do a lot more than the average digital camera, though. Hook it up to the PC via the USB cable, and you can capture video to your hard disk using Go Control. Captures, saved as AVI files, can be compressed and sent via email. You get a wide choice of resolutions and a refresh rate that's adjustable from 1 to 25 frames per second. A full range of video adjustments are also available. In the interests of Webcam publishing, one of the supplied programs will automatically dial up the Internet and upload the image to a Web page. Unfortunately captured footage resembles that produced by a cheap colour security camera.

THE VERDICT

Features	★★★★☆
Ease of use	★★★★☆
Value	★★★☆☆
Overall	★★★★☆

Contact: Agfa
URL: www.agfa.co.uk
Phone: (0208) 231 4903
Price: £100

5. Agfa CL18

THIS DEVICE'S CONVENTIONAL camera-like appearance gives you some idea as to its capabilities. As with the Creative Go Plus, it can be used with or without a PC. Compared to a fully-blown digital camera, there are limitations – imposed, we suspect, by the low-ish price. For a start, there's no LCD display for previewing or reviewing pictures. Secondly, the lens is a basic 'point-and-shoot' type, with no macro or zoom. In these respects, the CL18 is similar to the Creative model. You do, however, get a flash – the CL18 is the only PC camera tested to offer this feature. Note that the CL18's resolution is fine for email attachments and Web page applications. Agfa may have forgotten to include an image display on the camera, but it has attempted to redress the balance by providing a video output.

Watch it on the box

This feature is unique among the cameras tested. With the supplied phono cable, you can display captured pictures on a monitor or TV set with AV input. Agfa has taken other steps to make this a very Internet-friendly camera. For a start, the CL18 is interfaced, like the Go Plus, to your PC via a high-speed USB link. Not only does this make for incredibly fast (TWAIN) image transfers, but it allows the CL18 to be employed as a standard PC camera. On the CD-ROM are Video for Windows drivers, which enable the camera to work under applications like the supplied NetMeeting. Performance is excellent for such a cheap camera. They're characterised by crispness and accuracy, although the resolution puts a ceiling on the amount of detail that can be captured. Bearing in mind you get a fair-quality digital camera as well as a 'Webcam', the CL18 is excellent value.

THE VERDICT

Features	★★★★☆
Ease of use	★★★★☆
Value	★★★★☆
Overall	★★★★☆

JARGON BUSTER

OCR
The process of accurately converting printed text into its electronic equivalent.

CIF
Common Interchange Format. Specifies resolution of 352 x 288. High-quality images, but very low refresh rates.

SQCIF
Sub-quarter CIF. Specifies a resolution of 128 x 96. Facilitates quickly-freshed Internet video, albeit of poor quality.

QCIF
Quarter CIF. Specifies a resolution of 176 x 144. Medium-quality images, but can be updated more quickly.

VGA
Video Graphics Array, from the first high-quality PC display standard. Specifies a resolution of 640 x 480.

USB
Universal Serial Bus – a high-speed 'plug-and-play' serial data connection.

TWAIN
Standardised software protocol that enables image acquisition devices (scanners and cameras) to be accessed from within a program.

Refresh rate
How often the picture is updated. Expressed as the number of frames per second (fps). The higher, the more bandwidth, so dial-up Internet video-conferencing refreshes slowly.

THE WEBFUSION TWO GIGABYTE

RESELLER ACCOUNT

2GB fast UK-based webspace & 2000 POP3 email boxes. yourname.co.uk and anothername.co.uk included, extra virtual servers only £25 per year. No limit on number or config of resold sub-accounts. Your own and resold accounts each have 3GB monthly bandwidth allowance, CGI-BIN plus pre-installed scripts, support for Miva, PHP4, MySQL, ASP and RealAudio, unlimited email addresses, autoresponders and announcement lists, FTP access, graphical statistics, and a Virtual Control Panel for easy admin.

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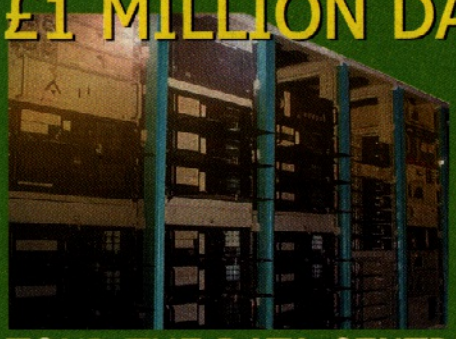

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Windows Made Easy

Windows Made Easy is the ultimate resource for people who've just bought their first PC. Everything you need to know about Windows is explained in clear, jargon-free tutorials, and the magazine is crammed with hardware hints and tips.

Issue 29 on sale 12 October

Mac Made Easy

Apple's stylish computers continue to attract new customers. If you've bought an iMac or iBook and need help with the basics, get started with Paragon's latest 'Made Easy' magazine, Mac Made Easy. Includes cover CD from issue 4.

Issue 4 on sale 24 August

Web Pages Made Easy

Once you've figured out the basics of connecting to the Net, why not have a go at making your own Web site? Web Pages Made Easy is the magazine you need to do this. Includes packed CD of the best Web-site creation software (Windows and Mac).

Issue 12 on sale 26 October

Internet Made Easy

The complete guide to getting online. This lively magazine includes photo guides to getting your computer connected, and explains exactly how to send email, use the Web and find information you want.

Issue 16 on sale 30 November

made easy

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QUICK TESTS

Scanning bliss

Practical internet BEST BUY ★★★★★

At last, a scanner that fulfils those promises to upload your photos to the Web in one touch

Contact: UMAX
URL: www.umax.co.uk
Phone: 01344 871342
Price: £89.99

SCANNERS HAVE BEEN around for years now, but beginners have been put off by the fact that they're often as easy to use as a banana-powered motorbike. Sure, they do their stuff, but there's too much effort involved for the Net-powered generation to be getting involved with.

At last, though, it seems as though this reign of terror is about to end with the launch of the AstraNET iA 101 from UMAX. For the first time in our young and frankly tedious lives, we've seen a scanner that works the way we want it to. Forget importing images, forget converting them, forget even about touching the keyboard.

With the aid of four nifty buttons (Edit, Copy, Communication and My Web) on the scanner itself, you can achieve all of your scanning goals quickly and easily. While we've seen scanners with Edit and Copy buttons before, which are after all the buttons you need to scan and photocopy, we've never seen owt like the action on the UMAX scanner.

Email euphoria

First up, one button does this great thing where you scan and enter your email program, with the scan already set as an attachment in a newly created message. Fill in your recipient's name and a witty message, and you're suddenly appearing on Cilla's *Surprise Surprise* in front of millions of people, meeting your long lost Uncle Roberto from Turin.

The real wow comes with the aptly-named 'Web' button. Press this, and your image will be saved as a JPEG, then saved to your special UMAX Web space. Oh, did we mention that you get 50Mb of Web space? No, we didn't, but you do.

All in all, this little wonder is nothing short of a dream. The scan quality is simply superb, and as for those all important buttons – they've got this lovely rubbery feel that means your fingers won't slip off them at the wrong moment.

THE VERDICT

Features	★★★★★
Ease of use	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★
Overall	★★★★★

Internet televison

Browse the Web on your TV for just a fiver a month with ONdigital

Contact: ONdigital
URL: www.ondigital.co.uk
Phone: 0870 60096960
Price: £5 a month

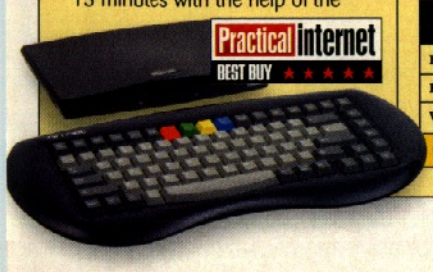
ACCESSING THE WEB and sending email has never been easier – and now you can use your TV. If you subscribe to digital terrestrial TV service ONdigital, you can get ONnet for just an extra fiver a month.

This gives you a full-size infra-red keyboard and a free 'net top box'. You also pay local call charges whenever you're online or sending email.

Setting up the box takes about 15 minutes with the help of the easy-to-follow manual (and a phone call to ONdigital to get it activated). You'll then have full access to the whole Web.

Despite this, a small number of sites are not fully accessible. The browser struggles with some frames and plug-ins and because it's not fully Java compatible, certain chatrooms are not unusable. This, though, could be remedied in future by an 'over the air' software upgrade to the box. Despite these small annoyances, cruising the Web on a 30-inch screen from the comfort of your sofa is an amazing experience.

ONnet also comes with some great video capture and voice email facilities. Best of all, though, there's a picture-in-picture facility that lets you watch TV in a corner of your screen while using the Web. Square-eyed heaven!



Practical internet BEST BUY ★★★★★

THE VERDICT

Features	★★★★☆
Ease of use	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★
Overall	★★★★★

Musical box

Costing less than 40 quid, the Pulse 415 will pump out your MP3 tunes with ease

Contact: Labtec
URL: www.labtec.com
Phone: 01256 386000
Price: £39.99

UNLESS YOU'RE SOME kind of audio masochist, you really need a decent amount of beef in your PC speakers these days. MP3s, multimedia games and even the occasional DVD are going to sound a bit pony and trap if you're forcing them to blare out of guffy tiny speakers.

The Pulse 415 speakers from Labtec try to address this problem, by giving you a nifty set of sound for £40. This three-piece outfit consists of an amplifier which is, we're sorry but it is, a black box with a hefty 15Watts subwoofer. The speakers, sorry satellites, are small enough to happily sit on anyone's desk without becoming clutter.

When it comes down to it though, you're wanting sound quality for your moolah. We don't think the Labtecs let you down here, and they've been happily belting out our favourite classic tunes without so much of a hint of cackle. Rarely has *The Sun Always Shines On TV* by A-ha (12-inch version, of course) sounded so damn good.

THE VERDICT

Features	★★★☆☆
Ease of use	★★★★☆
Value	★★★★☆
Overall	★★★★☆

The UK's fastest host.

Free with every Nicname.

Speed matters. Where a normal domain struggles to keep up, a Nicname delivers, ten times out of ten. In fact, Nicnames has been ranked number 1* in independent web-hosting tests in terms of speed and uptime. Traditional domain names can be slow and clumsy. And a missed opportunity is bad for business. With a Nicname you get maximum uptime coupled with exhilarating access. Search engines won't delist or demote your web site. More people will be able access your pages and you will be able to fill more orders. We make it our business to continually invest in the latest technology to get you where you want to be, faster.

Besides, speed frees you up to do it again.

*On 1st September 2000, Nicnames was ranked number 1 in independent speed tests at www.webperf.net.

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nic names

Established 1996. 100,000+ domains registered for clients including Virgin Net, Samsung, Land Rover, Tate and Lyle.

Nicnames, 7 Union Street, Aldershot, Hampshire, GU11 1EG. Visitors welcome.

* Very busy sites attract additional traffic charges (Phone or visit our web site for details). All prices exclude VAT.

QUICK TEST

A mighty midget!

The smallest fully-featured digital camera we've clapped eyes on can more than keep up with the big boys

Contact: Canon
URL: www.canon.co.uk
Phone: 0800 616417
Price: £549.99

FLOATING INTO THE digital camera market like a small bird's feather, the Digital Ixus from Canon is as small a digital camera as you could hope for these days. Okay, so claims of it being the same size as a credit card are ever so slightly exaggerated – it's 3.4 inches wide, 2.2 inches high and one inch thick.

But the Digital Ixus is a thing of beauty, with a sleek, stylish look which is bound to impress the ladies on a night out.

The major difference between this sweet little snapper and its similarly-sized counterparts is that this baby packs more power than the rest. A more than respectable 2.1 megapixels resolution will provide you with high quality images up to 1600x1200 pixels. Colour reproduction is excellent too.

Zoomtastic

What's more, there's a 2x digital zoom, so you can pick out 'H' from Steps perfectly at their sell-out concert, even from the back row.

Heck, it even uses AF multi point focus technology to calculate just the right focus and exposure for your digital compositions.

The Ixus also has a handy LCD display at the back for you to peruse, which even features an anti-reflective coating to give you an even better representation of your shot.

The buttons on the camera are possibly a tad on the small side, with their 'only slightly-raised' status liable to cause problems for fat fingered people. Image transfer is a doddle, with the nice people at Canon appreciating that a USB connection is pretty much essential for decent transfer rates.

All in all, this is a beauty of a camera, small enough to shove in your pocket, yet possessing enough in the way of quality to more than satisfy any decent photographer.

THE VERDICT

Features	★★★★☆
Ease of use	★★★★☆
Value	★★★☆☆
Overall	★★★★☆

What a card!

Give your Net gaming experience a boost

Contact: ATI
URL: www.ati.com
Phone: 01628 533115
Price: £255 (£299 inc VAT)

IF YOU'RE A Net gaming enthusiast, you must have a decent PC graphics card to appreciate the thrills and spills on your screen. ATI's new Radeon card is an excellent choice.

With 64Mb of DDR RAM running at 183MHz, expandable to 128Mb DDR RAM running at 200MHz, and the possibility of running dual Radeon GPUs on the board, it will be a while before you need to dip into your piggy bank to buy another PC card.

As well as the power, you also get seamless DVD playback. The Radeon offers full hardware IDCT decoding, meaning you'll have the best DVD quality money can buy. In addition to this, it also has TV output and video capture options, thanks to the S-Video and Composite in and out sockets. There really isn't much more the Radeon could offer, except maybe make dinner and walk the dog.

As it stands, the Radeon is the best graphics card on the market. The only minor gripe is the price. At £255 the Radeon certainly isn't cheap and if price is an issue for you, hold tight and wait for the stripped down OEM version (£220) or the upcoming 32Mb Radeon All-in-Wonder.

Practical internet BEST BUY ★★★★★

THE VERDICT

Features	★★★★★
Ease of use	★★★★★
Value	★★★★☆
Overall	★★★★★

Beat the speed limit

The era of the ten speed CD writer is here, and boy do we love it

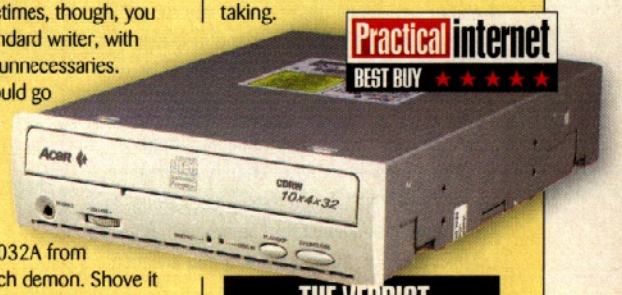
Contact: Acer
URL: www.acerperipherals.co.uk
Phone: 01344 392604
Price: £153+VAT

BURNING CDS HAS become an art form, with a plethora of yummy writers appearing on the market offering all manner of extras and goodies. Sometimes, though, you just want a standard writer, with none of these unnecessaries. Oh, and if it could go like the clappers, that would be a distinct advantage.

The CRW 1032A from Acer is one such demon. Shove it into an empty slot in your PC (it's internal, after all), and install the software, then start burning using the supplied Nero burning software.

With such ease of use, you should be making full use of the 10x writing speed quicker than Stephane Guivarc'h's lamented spell in Britain. With such speed at your disposal, you won't be surprised to learn that we burned a full 650Mb of sheer MP3 quality in just over eight minutes. Rewriting hardly paints the 1032A as a slouch either, with some nice 4x rewriting action there for the taking.

Practical internet BEST BUY ★★★★★

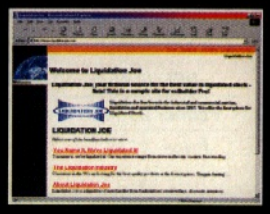


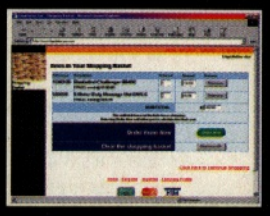
THE VERDICT

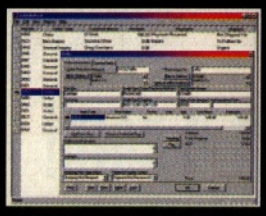
Features	★★★★☆
Ease of use	★★★★★
Value	★★★★★
Overall	★★★★★

TRIAL CD

Build an online business with ecBuilder multiactive. Pro







E-commerce is not just for big business any more...

Use **ecBuilder Pro** to create a professional Web site to accept orders and enquiries online.

Point and click your way to a ready-to-go business Web site as you work through the Wizard-driven input screens:

- Fill in your company and product information
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- Add your catalogue items
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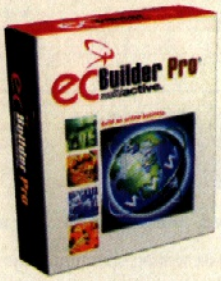
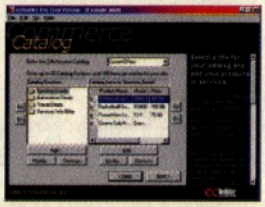
- Upload your site to the World Wide Web!

ecBuilder Pro offers you over 500 combinations of customisable templates. These templates are designed with business in mind, have clear navigational features, small file size, and advanced functionality. This allows you to create and establish your own Web site and the flexibility to manage it as and when you choose, without having to rely on expensive external resources.

Select from international currencies including the Euro. Add tax and shipping charges to accept orders from anywhere in the world. The shopping cart enables your customers to purchase multiple products from you safe in the knowledge that their details are protected using digital certificates for secure transactions.





Each Web site created by **ecBuilder Pro** includes:

- **Profile page:** For your company profile, address and contact details
- **100 Marketing pages:** Promote your business with descriptions and graphics
- **Storefront page:** To showcase your products and services
- **2,000 Catalogue items:** Featuring a Web page and graphic for each product or service offered
- **Built-in browser:** Simulate and maintain your Web site on your own computer using the preview mode
- **Order and Enquiry forms:** Each page or catalogue item links to a secure Web-based messaging system for customers to place orders and enquiries with you
- **Site promotion:** Your Web site will be automatically submitted to Internet search engines based on the keywords you choose
- **ecOrderDesk:** To accept and despatch orders from your new online customers as well as creating sales reports.

Survey your visitors. This valuable shopper information with order or enquiry information can then be transferred to your accounting, and customer management programs such as Maximizer, for order processing and fulfilment.

Visit our ecBuilder Pro demonstration site at www.ecbuilder.co.uk

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software on test

PANTS OR PERFECTION? THE LATEST INTERNET SOFTWARE GETS TRIED, TESTED AND RATED

Child safety nets

Making sure your kids don't see anything unsavoury online is vital to parents. *Practical Internet* tests five of the best Net filters

One of the things you really don't want to worry about is the child in your life finding unsuitable stuff on the Net. In fact, there's something profoundly distressing about the thought of little Jonny being able to get his hands on the kind of material that would even make Gary Glitter blush.

on the CD

You'll find several of these programs on this month's Practical Internet CD-ROM

Morally upstanding citizens that we are, we've decided to give you a rundown on a few of the Net filtering packages available at the moment. These programs aim to give you peace of mind that, even when you're not with your young 'uns, you can be sure that they can't visit nasty, seedy sites.

Based on all manner of stupendous technology, each of the programs reviewed filters out sites on the basis of set parameters. For example, the most basic method of filtering is based on the URL typed, but that would be particularly easy to get round, considering most sex sites don't necessarily have sex-based URLs.

Where you really want your filtering software to knock 'em bandy is in sorting out the pages themselves. A good filterer will somehow manage to eliminate all of the nastiness from a page, or if the whole page is littered with more filth than the *Sunday Sport*, will prevent anyone from ever accessing it in the first place.

Our software round-up should help you walk through one of the most treacherous and common minefields in the Internet game.

NET FILTERS TESTED

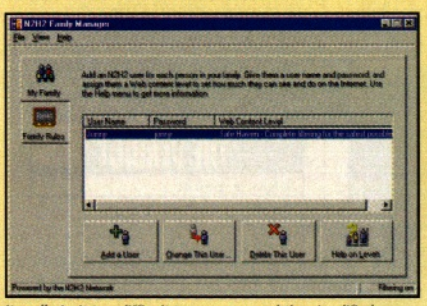
1. N2H2

Product: N2H2
Company: N2H2
Price: £29.99
URL: www.n2h2europe.com

WE CAN NEVER really argue with the reassurance that a big dog gives you, so we were instantly enamoured with N2H2. Having Bess the dog preventing youngsters from accessing naughty material gives us a warm glow inside, making us feel as if someone at N2H2 truly knows how to look after the children of the world.

The set up procedure in N2H2 is simple – you create an administrator (you), who has all kinds of options to fiddle about with to prevent other users of the Internet reaching places they shouldn't. To keep an eye out on young Jack or Emily, just create a username and password for them.

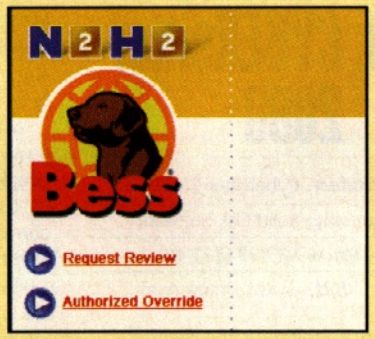
You've got three main levels of filtering to get your head round. Safe Haven is so constrictive in what it lets you view that even a Japanese prisoner of war prison guard would be satisfied. Protected Surfing goes some way to protecting against the more unstable elements of the Web. Free Ride is for you adults out there, who can make judgements yourselves on whether something is suitable to view or not, or who just like looking at porn. There's also an option to manually add the URLs of any Web sites you think should be banned.



It really isn't too difficult to move around the simplified N2H2 interface

Filtering in action

So, you've set N2H2 up to run in Safe Haven mode and left young Jack on his todd to surf the Web, but how does it work? Well, typing the URL of a known sex site (we got somebody else to tell us one, because we don't know any, honest), simply brought up an excellent redirect page. Instead of the usual boring malarkey, you're instead told that 'Bess can't go there', and presented with a lovely cartoon drawing of an authoritative-looking dog. Not only that, but there's a handy safe search option available, too.



Bess the dog will look out for your family values

Problems have been known to arise in filter programs when you use traditional searching methods, and this was the only area where N2H2 didn't quite cut the mustard. Typing 'girls' in the metacrawler search engine, we were given all manner of results that we would feel slightly queasy about a small child seeing. The thought of young Jack asking mummy and daddy what 'Animal Sex' is doesn't exactly inspire us with confidence. Okay, so you can't actually visit the site itself, but it's hardly the 'Safe haven' we were looking for.

THE VERDICT

What's good:
Easy to set up. Powerful. Good use of a cartoon dog

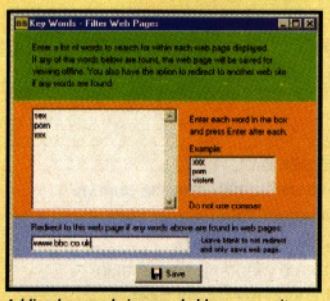
What's bad:
Can allow dodgy links in search engines through. Not so good with the pages themselves

Overall ★★★★☆

2. IamBigBrother

Product: IamBigBrother
Company: Tybee Software
Price: $29.99 (£20)
URL: www.iambigbrother.com

FOR ALL YOU scampeteers out there hoping and praying that this is a Nasty Nick tie-in, we're proud to tell you that it isn't. In fact, after the hubbub of this summer, this might be the only Big Brother themed item you can pick up which isn't a money-making spin-off.



Adding keywords is remarkably easy... pity they don't seem to work, though

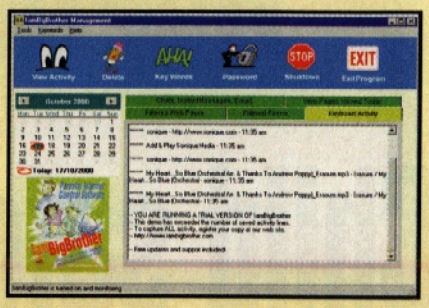
IamBigBrother is actually a nifty filterer, although as the name might imply to some of the more astute of you out there, it works in a slightly different way to other filtering packages. Instead of preventing users visiting sites, IamBigBrother aims to name and shame by allowing you to store practically every single piece of information regarding the surfing session of young Sally.

We are watching you

We're not entirely sure of the ethics of spying on someone's habits when they're browsing. We'd like to think that the nuclear family head can stop children accessing rudeness in the first place, rather than pretend you trust them, only to turn round with a smug look on your face the minute they look at something unsuitable. Still, IamBigBrother does this remarkably well.

It also works on emails and Instant Messages, often the cause of embarrassment and horror for the jaded non-Net-savvy parent. Just use the easily identifiable options on the main screen to achieve your filtering goals.

There is an option to allow you to filter out Web sites at source, based around any number of keywords you enter. Unfortunately, this seemed to be as effective at filtering as shouting at the monitor to stop loading up the Web page. In short, it didn't work at all, and we could easily view some highly seedy material.



Everything is accessible, with a series of pretty and easily identifiable icons

Although it doesn't work too well, we were taken with the interface. Rarely has anything looked, and felt, so easy to use. It's worth trying just for the family drawing you get in the bottom-left of the main screen, which contains the cutest looking people outside of an episode of *Tots TV*.

THE VERDICT

What's good:
So easy that it could be used by children. Visually attractive

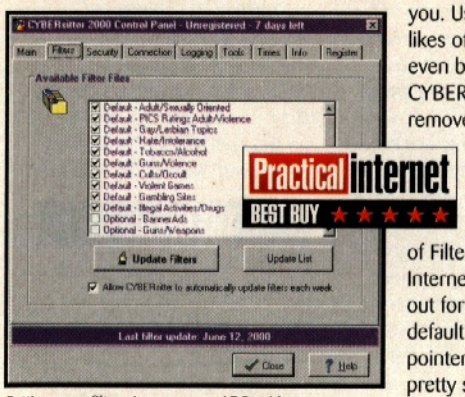
What's bad:
Doesn't seem to do that much in the way of filtering

Overall ★★★☆☆

3. CYBERsitter 2000

Product: Cybersitter 2000
Company: Solid Oak Software
Price: $39.99 (£27.40)
URL: www.solidoak.com

IN THE MIDST of the filtering fracas, CYBERsitter comes breezing in like a modern day Mary Poppins, administering all manner of goodness and light to any small child with the temerity to cross its path.



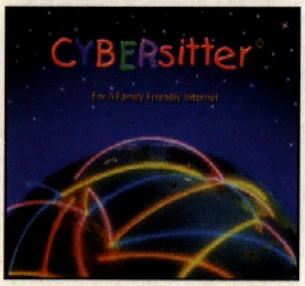
Setting your filters is as easy as ABC, with a variety of easy to understand options

While most other filterers use a heavy hand to look after the small people, CYBERsitter lets them go to all of the sites they would normally, and even a few that you might think would be as dodgy as a Billy Idol comeback tour. One of the joys of CYBERsitter is that it will actually let you search for nasty stuff in search engines, and will even display the results to you. Using technology the likes of which we wouldn't even begin to understand, CYBERsitter manages to remove only the naughty stuff from within a page.

CYBERsitter works to a series of Filter Files, which tell Internet Explorer to watch out for any number of default and optional pointers. Most of these are pretty self-explanatory – you're unlikely to find a site resplendent with the finest in gay sex shots with a hint of violence and drugs thrown in that is aimed at children anyway.

Crème de la crème

In practice, no other filterer works half as well as CYBERsitter. Not only are the features more comprehensive than other programs, but everything just works better. As is the case with all of these babies, ease of use is the key, and none are more straightforward and simple as CYBERsitter. All of the functions of the program are available from the main screen tabs, with only a few of the tabs likely to come into usage more than occasionally.



There is a myriad of options available to prevent those cheeky youngsters seeing rude things

If we had children, and looking like us, you can't really be surprised that we haven't, this is definitely the filter package that we'd trust with our offspring when we were out drinking our sorrows away in the local public house establishment.

THE VERDICT

What's good:
Very easy to use. Powerful features

What's bad:
Some sites escape the clutches of CYBERsitter

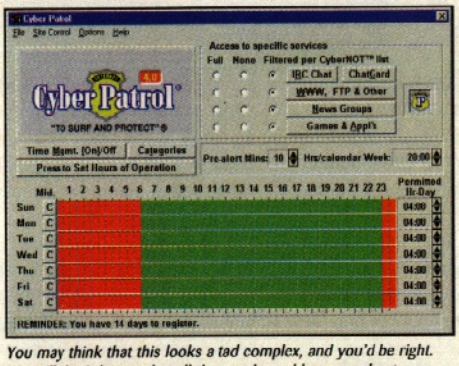
Overall ★★★★★

4. Cyber Patrol

Product: Cyber Patrol 4.0
Company: SurfControl
Price: £24.95
URL: www.surfcontrol.com

BOASTING ALL MANNER of sheriff's badge motifs, Cyber Patrol was supposedly created by a couple of outraged parents in the good ole US of A. On first sight, Cyber Patrol would seemingly romp home with our Best Buy award on what would appear to be the most comprehensive range of features you're likely to see.

Unfortunately, Cyber Patrol is actually about as easy to use as a voice-activated tape dispenser. It took us a good while to even begin to find out what the hell was going on, although as soon as we started Internet Explorer, we instantly had filtered heaven within our grasp. Our rudimentary attempts to reach a known porny site floundered, and resulted in only more sightings of the infamous Cyber Patrol badge.

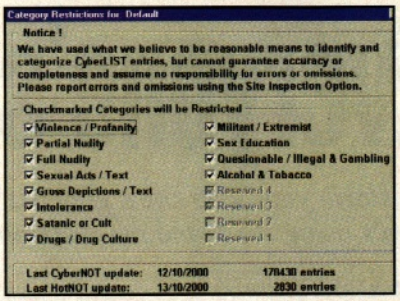


You may think that this looks a tad complex, and you'd be right. We still don't know what all those coloured bars are about

Keep it safe

As well as the ubiquitous sites filtering, you can also fiddle about with the program so that it prevents kiddies from divulging your intimate financial or personal information to complete strangers in chat rooms. You can also create up to nine users, restricting the time and content access for each individual.

Unfortunately, it always comes back to the same problem – namely the peeps at SurfControl have just tried to cram too much into the program. Apart from being difficult to use, Cyber Patrol 4.0 is also one of the ugliest looking creatures we've seen in our time, with an interface rarely seen since Windows 3.1 became obsolete. This really is a pity, for there is more than enough here to be getting on with – so you'll just have to endure a vomit-enducing style and headache-inspiring over-elaboration of features.



Choosing your site filters is as easy as ticking a couple of boxes

If you've always dreamed of being your very own 'house sheriff', then Cyber Patrol should allow you to annoy the rest of your family to death with your virtual badge, and your new-found filtering attitude.

THE VERDICT

What's good:
Millions and millions of features for you to grapple with

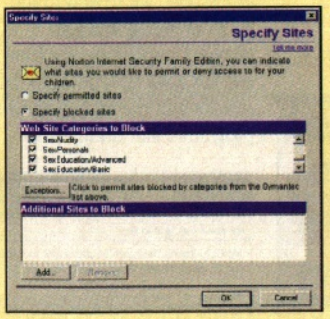
What's bad:
Overly complicated to use. Looks bloody ugly

Overall ★★★☆☆

5. Internet Security 2001

Product: Norton Internet Security 2000
Company: Symantec
Price: £39.99
URL: www.symantec.com

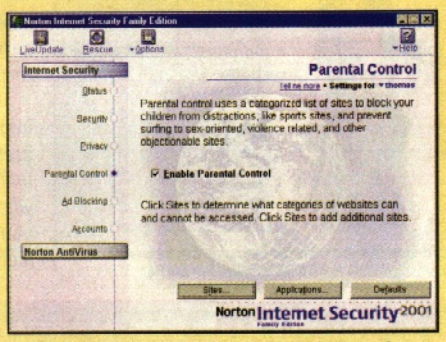
WHEN YOU SEE a big guy like Norton steam into the field, you expect great things. With such a fine pedigree, you'd hope for something a bit special. We were ever so keen to get this monster package installed on our machine to feel the force of Symantec.



The list of site types to filter would be all the more impressive if they worked a bit better

First off, it's a bit cheeky of us to put Internet Security (Family Edition) in this group test, for it does so much more than simply filter out nastiness from your browser. As the Quo sang in their epochal classic, whatever you want is here – from firewall software to privacy controls, from anti-virus to ad blocking. This is undoubtedly the all-rounder of this round-up, easing its paws into so many pies as to be positively full to bursting.

That was of no concern to us, however, as we embarked on a filtering frenzy. Setting the program up is easy enough, although it does take about 15 minutes, and you have to set up your admin account to allow you to make changes. Having done all this, though, you only need to configure an account for the youngsters, telling Internet Security the age of this precocious chappy. If you so desire, you can also check through all of the filter options to ensure that you're eliminating the right categories of sites.



With such a wide range of options on the go, this is much more than just a filterer

Filtering fiasco

Having spent a bit of time configuring the package just the way we wanted it, we were slightly concerned at the results we encountered. Although the program more than adequately coped with direct entries of URLs into the browser, preventing us from viewing nearly all in this category, we noticed alarming problems elsewhere.

We trundled along to our usual search engine, and entered our testing 'girls' in the search field. Surprised were we to see links to hardcore sites again, but that was nothing compared to our shock when we could actually visit some of the sites in question. When you're using a filter package, you don't expect to have to quickly turn off your monitor lest your Editor sees the barrage of filth which has unexpectedly appeared on screen – but that's what we had to do. Hardly a stirring result, then.

THE VERDICT

What's good:
Immense package of products. Good options to configure the program

What's bad:
The filtering software is decidedly dodgy in execution

Overall ★★★☆☆

QUICK TEST

Everyone's a winner

Transform your Web site's graphics into professional, eye-catching images using the brand new version of Paint Shop Pro 7

Practical internet BEST BUY ★★★★★

Product: Paint Shop Pro 7
Company: Jasc
Phone: 01295 258 335
Price: £79.99 (£34.95 for upgrade)
URL: www.digitalworkshop.co.uk

on the CD

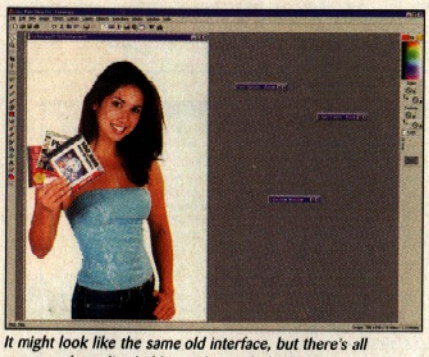
A trial version of Paint Shop Pro 7 is on this month's Practical Internet CD

FOR SALE: ONE graphics package. Brand spanking new, never out of the box. Recently refurbished, this much sought after property comes from a stable of pedigree products. All mod cons. Ideal for first time buyer or experienced user. Yours for £80.

Sound too good to be true? It might very well be, but Paint Shop Pro 7 is as jam-packed with features as you like for under 80 quid. Most of the problems that beset Paint Shop Pro in its previous incarnations have been ironed out, so we're now talking about a product that's as smooth as a pint of Guinness being drunk by Richard Gere in *Pretty Woman*. For all of you who've been whiling away on Paint Shop Pro for years, desperate for the qualities of Photoshop, your ship might just have come in.

For the first time ever, we reckon that this copy of PSP gives Adobe's out of this world package a run for its money. With a radically redesigned interface, there's so much more at your disposal than you'd ever have expected before in a program bearing the name Paint Shop Pro. What's more, all of the quality features and trinkets available to you are so much easier to get your hands on than before.

One thing we're particularly impressed with is the range of pretty and helpful icons found in the main menus. Unsure what the Swirl tool might do to your picture? Well, fret no more, for the gorgeous swirly icon next to the menu choice demonstrates in picture form just what effect this will have on your holiday snaps. In a world where the affordable graphics package is becoming as common as seeing a busy shop in the run-up to Christmas, it's the little touches like this that can help a program stand out from the crowd. Paint Shop Pro has more than enough of these to keep even David Bailey himself as chuffed as a squirrel with a sackful of nuts.



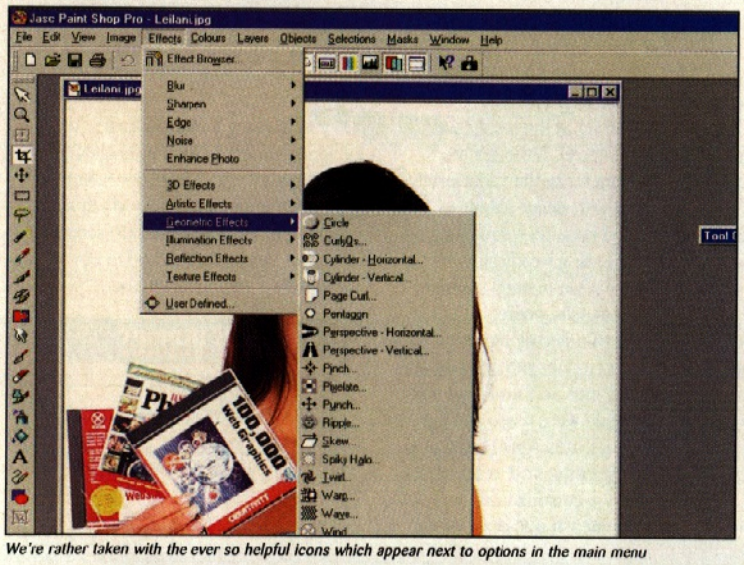
It might look like the same old interface, but there's all manner of goodies hidden underneath the bonnet

Designs on the Web

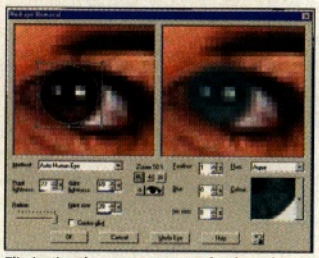
In keeping with the ongoing trend for graphics packages to eat into the Web design market, Paint Shop Pro 7 has a flurry of fandabydozy Web graphics options. The chance to create image maps in your standard graphics program is a definite bonus, and transforming your pictures with Web ready rollover mayhem has been made as straightforward as you could possibly hope for. There's also the chance to design your standard rollover buttons and text in Paint Shop Pro. Although we wouldn't recommend throwing away that virginally new copy of Adobe GoLive 5 just yet, there's a decent selection of choices for you to fiddle about with in the interactive Web graphics field.

Where Paint Shop Pro really wins, though, is in the way that so many of the fiddly tasks you used to have to spend valuable time sorting out are now really, incredibly easy. Lots of noise has been made about the Redeye removal tool within the program, and we can assure you that it is very special. While we've never really spent that much time studying the art of red-eye removal, this is obviously the way to do it. All you have to do is zoom in on the eye itself, draw a circle around the iris, and the rest is child's play. There's a host of eye colours built into the program, so you can easily find your way to just the right shades of grey and blue, should you ever be removing red-eye from a picture of David Bowie. All of the boring stuff is automated, letting you get on with the more interesting aspects of adjusting pictures.

We were simply aghast at just how much is crammed into this lively £80 package. Having been critical of Paint Shop Pro in the past, we're now in the midst of wiping the last remnants of humble pie from our lips, and bow down to the new king of the budget graphics program, Paint Shop Pro 7.



We're rather taken with the ever so helpful icons which appear next to options in the main menu



Eliminating the nasty spectre of red-eye has never been easier

THE VERDICT

What's good:
More features than you've any right to expect for 80 quid. Dead, dead easy to use

What's bad:
Still not quite as versatile as Photoshop

Overall ★★★★★

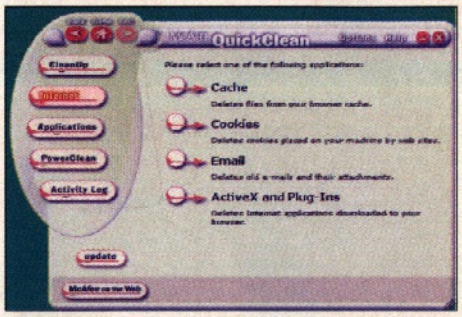
Clean as a whistle

If your PC's hard drive is being filled up with megabytes of junk, give it some breathing space with McAfee QuickClean

Product: QuickClean
Company: McAfee
Phone: 0800 0927 160
Price: £24.95
URL: www.mcafee.com

IT'S ALL TOO easy to build up a wide and varied collection of junk files, unused plug-ins and cookies on your PC after a prolonged period of Web browsing. A huge amount of malarkey goes into your Temporary Internet Files folder, and even a supposed delete of this will still leave your PC as dirty as a Roy Chubby Brown gag.

Enter the excellent McAfee QuickClean. Surfing will no longer leave you with that stained and messy feeling, for this beauty will actually automate the cleaning potential of your computer. As well as this, there's all kind of email and other Web action for you to peruse and plunder as you wish. As you'd expect from a McAfee product, every function is performed well, and with a certain level of intuitiveness.



Remove those unnecessary files from your PC in one foul swoop with the excellent McAfee QuickClean

More than you think

To call QuickClean an Internet files clean-up program would be like calling evergreen multi-faceted entertainer Bob Monkhouse a game show host. Like the perma-smiled superstar, there's so much more to this product than some people would have you believe.

In fact, this is pretty much all you'd need to finally keep your computer free of those nightmarish problems which beset those funsters who don't keep a tab on the finer points of their PC.

Our only criticism of this package is one that won't surprise any of you who've used something similar in the past. On installing, QuickClean likes to take over the running of your PC, and have a hand in everything that goes on. Still, it at least performs these tasks efficiently.

THE VERDICT

What's good:
Highly efficient at removing all the gunk that builds up on your hard drive

What's bad:
Tries to take over your PC at every opportunity

Overall ★★★★☆

Cheap photo fun

You want a feature-filled photo manipulation package but you don't want to pay the earth for it? Try PhotoPlus 6

Product: PhotoPlus 6
Company: Serif
Phone: 0115 914 2000
Price: £29.99
URL: www.serif.com

WHILE WE'VE GONE on and on about the stunning merits of Photoshop 6 in this issue, your average punter is highly unlikely to shell out a whopping £500 just on a graphics program – especially considering you could buy a PC for that price.

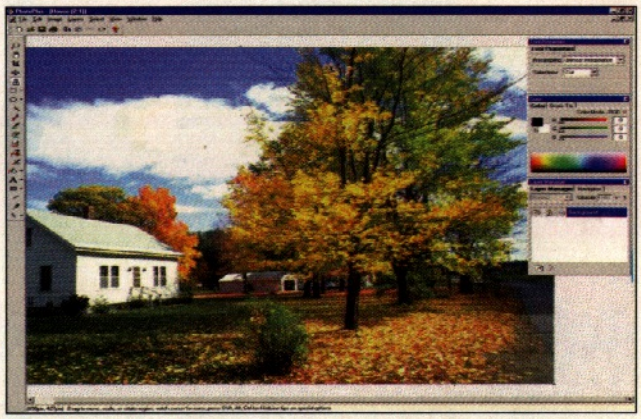
That's why we thank heavens for small mercies like Serif's PhotoPlus 6. Costing a penny under £30, this little wonder will satisfy Web site designers of every level as well as digital camera enthusiasts.

Familiar faces

As soon as you open the program for the first time, you'll notice how similar it appears to Adobe's mighty giant. With its array of floating palettes and quality toolbars, you could be forgiven for thinking this is Photoshop on a diet. We were not surprised in any way when we discovered that there were far fewer features than Adobe's monster. Sure, you can do all of the basics and more, so if you're into fiddling about with the size of images and basic tinkering, you'll be sorted.

PhotoPlus is hardly likely to romp home with the 'best dressed graphics package' at the annual graphics awards, but if you've got a burning desire to get your hands on a fully working new graphics program, this will sort you out.

Where else do you get such an array of niceness for under £30?



Sometimes the expensive option isn't always the best – PhotoPlus 6 is great value for money

THE VERDICT

What's good:
Decent amount of features. Really, really cheap

What's bad:
Rather limited in what it can do. Never likely to be a Photoshop

Overall ★★★★☆

dedicated servers

dedicated-servers.co.uk

After months of planning and implementation, the new WebFusion Data Centre is now open
WebFusion have spent over £1 million creating the UK's most advanced web hosting data facility, featurin
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LIVEMOTION

Adobe LiveMotion Classroom in a book

A step by step guide to using Adobe's LiveMotion program

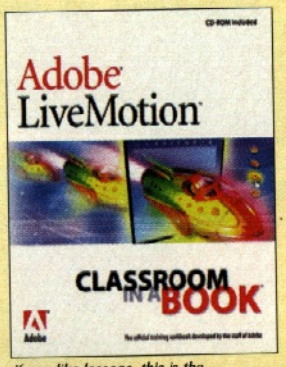
Author: Adobe Creative Team
Publisher: Adobe Press
Price: £33.99
URL: www.adobe.co.uk
ISBN: 0-201-70322-X

LIVEMOTION FROM ADOBE is the big challenger to Flash's domination as the Web animation tool of choice. This special book from Adobe aims to provide all the information required to get the most from LiveMotion.

Set out as a series of lessons, the Classroom in a Book takes you through every aspect of LiveMotion step-by-step from the very simplest first step right through to more advanced features.

We found the book to be a little too simplistic in some senses. For a start, the text is quite large and some of the lessons are a little to easy and could be gleaned from the manual that comes with LiveMotion itself.

That said, this is a useful reference and will probably be a great help for those not used to the way Adobe does things. And the included CD is great.



If you like lessons, this is the book for you

THE VERDICT

What's good:
Big pictures, easy to follow, well laid out

What's bad:
Some of the lessons seem to be too simple

Overall ★★★★☆

NET SHOPPING

'How it works' Shopping on the Internet

Enjoy a trip down memory lane with this book from the beeb.com

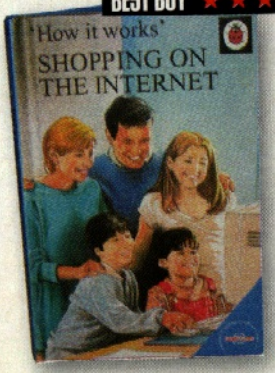
Author: n/a
Publisher: Ladybird books / Beeb.com
Price: £1.99
URL: www.beeb.com
ISBN: 0 – 563 – 53779 – 5

PERHAPS THE MOST unintentionally-amusing book we've seen all year, this Ladybird book – in association with Beeb.com – is for children, and as such it does a good job of demystifying Net shopping. As an example of postmodern irony, however, this should also be on every adult techie's bookshelf.

For those of you who don't remember these Ladybird books from childhood, here's a brief explanation. Watercolours of smiling families and sanitised-for-kids explanations of history are the order of the day, with simple explanations and not a nasty hacker in sight.

This obviously isn't going to tell you anything you didn't know about using the Internet, but at least you'll find out who Douglas Engelbart is (we didn't know either). And for just £1.99, you can own a picture of the most obviously Prozac-happy family since The Waltons.

Practical internet BEST BUY ★★★★★



Yes, you too will have a family like this when you shop on the Net

THE VERDICT

What's good:
The pictures, the cover, the smell of childhood

What's bad:
We're not small children any more and we can't go out and play

Overall ★★★★★

WHICH?

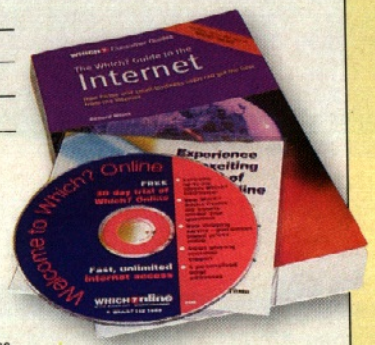
The Which? Guide to the Internet

Something missing in your life? It could be this book

Author: Richard Wentk
Company: Which? Books
Price: £10.99
URL: www.which.net
ISBN: 0-85202-845-8

THE WHICH? GUIDE to the Internet, which comes with a free CD, is very good indeed. Assuming no Internet knowledge, the first few chapters will be obvious to many – explanation of smileys, abbreviations, and other such obvious tricks. Further into the book, the Which? reputation for thoroughness turns out to be well founded – there are explanations of Uuencoding, BinHex and Base64, for instance – and those minor gaps in our knowledge started to fill up.

Perhaps the only reason this book hasn't got five stars is its lack of pictures and walkthroughs, which makes the whole thing mildly inaccessible. However, the Which? Guide is very well written, and there are case studies to illustrate what other people have been up to online. This book should be invaluable for most people, from beginners to those experienced Net-heads who suspect that they've missed a trick somewhere along the line.



The Which? Guide to the Internet is a valuable resource for consumers everywhere

THE VERDICT

What's good:
Clear, well-written, comprehensive, a nice purple colour

What's bad:
Lack of pictures and walkthroughs

Overall ★★★★☆

FREE EBOOK

The War of the Worlds

No-one would have believed in the last years of the nineteenth century...

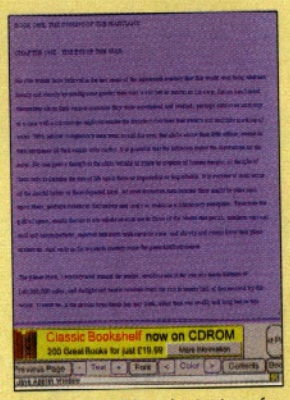
Author: H. G. Wells
Company: Classic Bookshelf
Price: Free
URL: www.classicbookshelf.com
ISBN: n/a

CLASSIC BOOKSHELF IS a great site for those who actually want to read classic books – rather than just buying them for effect. The entire books are kept unabridged online and the site remembers where you were in the book you were reading next time around.

Using a Java-powered Applet the colour, font size and typeface can all be changed to suit your eyes. We favour Times with blue on purple at about 12, but then we're weird like that.

The pages can be a little slow to update – though no more so than turning one in a book – but there are lots of classic books here that you can read while pretending to work, like us.

H. G. Wells' War of the Worlds is well worth reading here for those who haven't already sampled its delights. One of the earliest and best science fiction novels from one of the finest authors of the last 200 years, the book knocks the rip-off film *Independence Day* into a particularly cocked hat.



Immerse yourself in a classic piece of literature with War of the Worlds

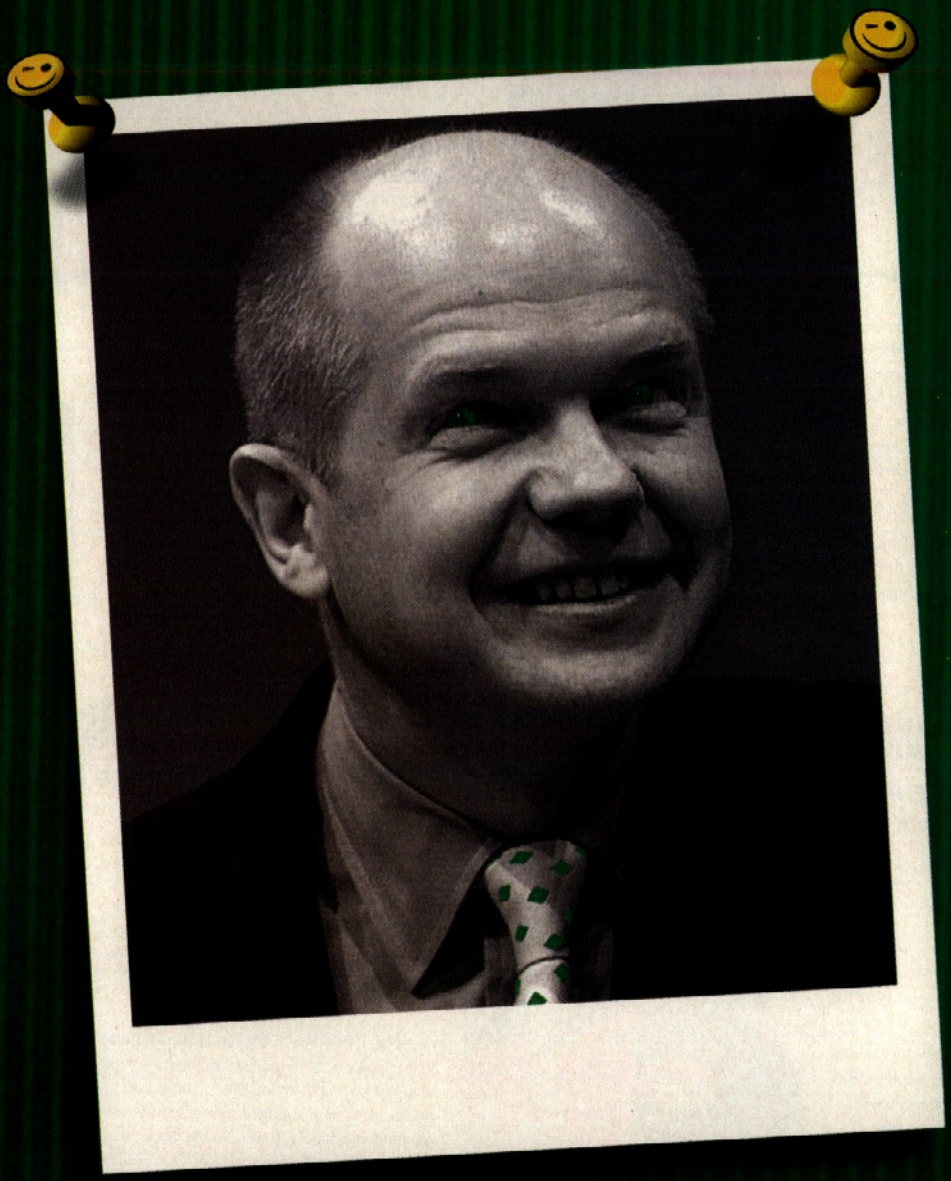
THE VERDICT

What's good:
Easy to read and simple to load up

What's bad:
The Martians

Overall ★★★★☆

Are you good enough opposition?



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net gamer

JOYSTICKS AT THE READY! WE REVIEW THE LATEST AND GREATEST NET GAMES FOR YOUR PC

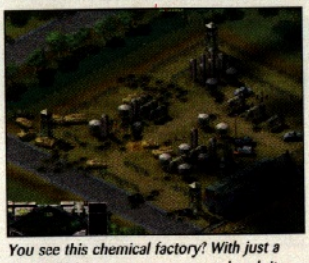
Sudden Strike takes place in the Second World War, and gives you the chance to change history

Sudden Strike

Publisher: CDV
Price: £34.99
URL: www.suddenstrike.com

LET'S CUT TO the chase on this one – Sudden Strike is one of the best RTS games we have ever had the privilege to play. For months now this game has been teasing us as screenshots, news tit bits and eventually a demo version made their way into the big wide world.

Now that the final version has made it on to our screens, we are delighted to report that it does not disappoint. Set in WWII, you can get a chance to fight in the war and change history, commanding authentic looking units in the process.



You see this chemical factory? With just a few skillful manoeuvres, you can bomb it

As with so many other great games out on the market, it is the attention to detail that makes this game rise above the rest. Drop a bomb on the body of one of your fallen comrades and see him fly into the air in a bloody mess. Spot a couple of enemies manning a gun and you can kill them and use the artillery against the enemy. Thoroughly addictive and terrific fun to play, we can't recommend it enough.

Practical internet
BEST BUY ★★★★★

THE VERDICT

What's good:
Addictive and great fun to play

What's bad:
Nothing that we can think of

Overall ★★★★★

Airfix Dogfighter

Publisher: Digital Entertainment
Price: £39.99
URL: www.dogfighter.net

IN THE SERIOUS world of combat flight sims, it's refreshing to find a game that doesn't take itself too seriously.

Airfix Dogfighter is such a game. It allows you to leap into the cockpit and release some tension with some stunning aerobatics and corking dogfights. The premise is that you control an Airfix plane through a series of campaigns set in a house and garden. Battle areas include bedrooms, lounges and stairways, with the ability to fire at doors to close them and lights that can be shot on or off.

The action moves outside

With only 20 missions, this won't keep you entertained for long, but it is good fun. The gameplay is solid enough, though there are a few niggles – some of the settings feel very cramped with not much room for manoeuvre. What's more, combat is a bit of a lottery – rockets had no effect on some tanks, while a quick blast from the chain gun tore them to shreds. Despite these flaws, this is a decent game.

THE VERDICT

What's good:
Doesn't take itself too seriously

What's bad:
Cramped gameplay with little room for manoeuvre

Overall ★★★★☆

The Sims – Livin' It Up

Publisher: EA
Price: £19.99
URL: www.thesims.com

THE SIMS WAS one of the smash hits of the year – it won over thousands of people who spent every waking hour straining to gain promotion to astronaut, or determined to make just one more friend before bed time. All those who thought they had got the thing out of their system had better run for cover, as EA has released an expansion pack that looks set to get everyone addicted to The Sims once again.

What a lovely residence!

Livin' It Up does nothing revolutionary as far as the gameplay is concerned, but adds some great new items to the house, five new career paths, some groovy decorations and some new non-player characters. Promotions are gained in the same way as in the original, leaving the house in a good mood and learning new skills. Some of the new items for the house are great too; we particularly liked the chemistry set. Once a potion is concocted it can be drunk, having a number of different random effects. We enjoyed this game very much.

THE VERDICT

What's good:
A great addition for Sims fans

What's bad:
Might not have as many features as some would like

Overall ★★★★☆

on the CD

OUR COVER CD HAS BEEN LOVINGLY COMPILED JUST FOR YOUR NEEDS. SO WHETHER YOU WANT SOME VIDEO ACTION OR TO DESIGN A SITE FROM SCRATCH IT'S ALL HERE

Using the CD-ROM

The minimum recommended specification to run the *Practical Internet* CD is 800 X 600 screen resolution, 16Mb RAM, 16 bit colour, Windows 95/98/2000, (note we do not support Windows 3.1) Intel Pentium or compatible P90. We recommend that all users shut down all other applications while running the CD.

The CD will autorun in Windows 95/98. For users without autorun enabled go to the start menu, select RUN and type d:\PracticalInternet.exe (replacing 'd' with the letter of your CD drive) and press 'Return'.

Damaged discs

We will be please to replace any CD that is cracked, scratched or snapped upon purchase. Return them to the following address: Cover Disc Returns, Paragon Publishing, Paragon House, St Peter's Road, Bournemouth, BH1 2JS. If you experience technical problems, not due to physical damage on the CD, please DO NOT return any discs to us unless requested by the support team.

Missing discs

If you have purchased the magazine and have not received your CD, we will be happy to send you out a replacement disc. Email **subs@paragon.co.uk** quoting the magazine and issue number, full postal address and daytime phone number.

Problems using the disc

If you encounter problems using the CD or installing the software you can email **cdhelp@paragon.co.uk**. Questions will be answered twice daily.

Please provide us with as much information about the technical specifications of your machine and the software errors you are receiving as well as quoting the magazine and issue number in your email.

Our helpdesk team will be taking calls about disc installation problems on Wednesday afternoons between 2 and 6pm. Phone **01202 200259**.

NOTE: ***This service can only deal with problems when installing software from our cover CDs. Issues surrounding the use and purchase of software and all Internet service provider queries must be referred to the relevant software publisher, merchant or ISP.***

The CD logo

Look out for this logo in the magazine. It tells you which of the programs mentioned in features, or explored in tutorials, are on the Practical Internet cover CD-ROM.

BETTER OFFLINE BROWSING

Download essential Web sites to your PC, then organise them with SurfSaver 1.5

There's something particularly irritating about having to take notes from interesting sites on the Web. The whole point of the Web is you shouldn't have to rely on a big pad of paper, ready to take down information when you see something that tickles your fancy.

Okay, so you could save the page to disk, but you've still got that nightmarish problem of not remembering why you've saved the page in the first place when you return to it months down the line.

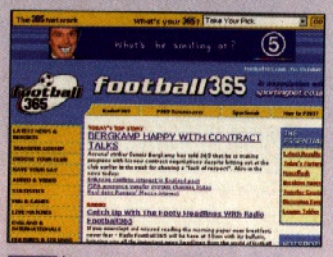
If you use the fabulous full product version of SurfSaver, you'll be well on the way to Web saving and surfing nirvana in very little time. Just install the plug-in to your PC, and you'll have a handy option in Internet Explorer to save the page you're on.

Installing is about as difficult as eating a bowl of pasta. Just set it all up in the usual manner from the CD interface. The only way that you'll notice SurfSaver in the future is the rather helpful and handy menu options in Internet Explorer. This is easy to reach, all you have to do is right-click the mouse button.

More impressive than that, though, is the fact that SurfSaver saves the page to a folder alongside others, making it easier to browse through what you've saved. And as if that wasn't enough for you greedy surfing goblins out there, you can even search through your saved pages, in much the same way as you would with a live site. Suddenly, finding just the right snippet of information seems much easier.

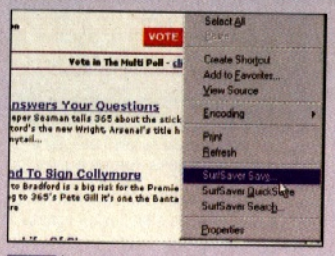
FULLY WORKING PROGRAM! AS SOLD FOR £30

SAVING YOUR SITES WITH SURFSAVER



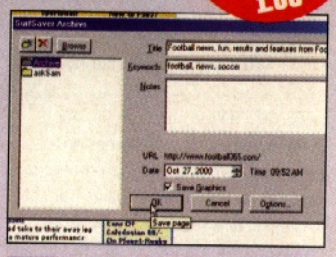
1 Install SurfSaver

Installing SurfSaver is a doddle. Just click on the menu link and follow the simple steps. Once it's finished, open Internet Explorer and visit a site you think you'd like to keep – we've gone for Football365 at **www.football365.com**.



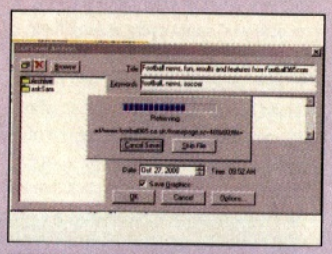
2 Saving a page

Right-click the mouse anywhere on the page. This will bring up the standard Internet Explorer context sensitive menu, with the added bonus of some extra SurfSaver options. From this menu, select 'SurfSaver Save'



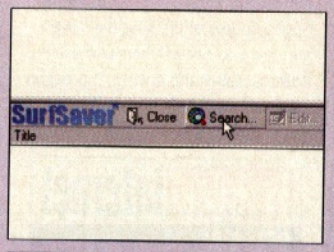
3 Saving options

You'll now see the save dialog box, where you can select some of the finer points. We've given a few keywords to make future searches slightly easier, but you'll be okay if you stick with the default options.



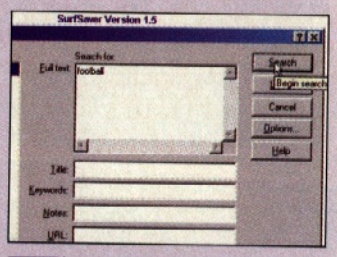
4 The saving process

Depending on the page you've selected, this process will take a bit of time – anything up to a few minutes if you've gone for a graphics-heavy page. Once this has been done, you'll go back to your standard IE interface.



5 Searching your pages

Right-click anywhere on the page, and choose 'SurfSaver search' from the pop-down menu. This will take you to the SurfSaver default page stored on your hard drive. To begin the search, click on the 'Search' icon.



6 Searching

In the dialog box that appears, select the folder where you store your pages, then enter a search word. When you're happy, click on 'Search' and watch SurfSaver kick into action.

PRESTO! VIDEOWORKS

CAPTURE AND EDIT VIDEO AND AUDIO FILES FROM A VARIETY OF SOURCES WITH THIS FULLY WORKING PRODUCT

YOU'VE BOUGHT A PC, you've got the camcorder, you've got the capture card as well. But, chances are, they're all about as linked in your mind as sausages and toffee apples. Well, now you've got the chance to sort it with this fantastic program.

Not only can you capture AVI files direct to your hard drive from the interface, but you can also alter all manner of options for your video or still image file. Things like frame capture rate, frame size and time limit, once the domain of the expert, are now well within your grasp.

When it comes to editing, you won't find many programs in this field easier to use than VideoWorks. A standard filmstrip affair is in action, and you have access to more than 150 transitions and effects to give your piece of film that quality feel.

Now all that's left is for you to get that cover-mounted book, rip it out of its lovely plastic sheath and follow our step by step guide to putting video on your site.

Free Mac stuff

Booty for the Bill Gates-bashers out there

Flash 5 installer

We never like to see you Macsters out there left out, so we've given you a chance to follow the second part of our splendid Flash 5 tutorial starting on page 80. Get your laughing gear round this, easily the best Web animation package on the go.

Eudora 5 (Beta)

Why should the iMac community fail to be as impressed as the PC fraternity with the chance to see just how offensive your mates' emails to you are, with the quite simply brilliant chilli rating system?

PLUS:

- Alladin Expander 5.5
- Alladin DropStuff 5.5
- Anarchie 3.7
- Download Deputy
- Debabilizer Lite LE
- Internet Explorer 5.0
- Netscape Communicator 4.75
- Outlook Express 5.0
- Shockwave Installer

Serif WebPlus 1.0

FULLY WORKING PROGRAM! RRP SOLD FOR £20

CREATE YOUR OWN DAZZLING SITES IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE WITH THIS PACKAGE

WE'VE LONG BEEN believers that there is no easier way to get your very own Web site up and running than by using one of Serif's pretty decent packages. Everything is done in such a remarkably easy way that we often wonder why the rest don't do it like this. All in all, then, we were rather pleased when we could give WebPlus 1.0 to you for nothing on this month's CD.

When you load the program, you'll instantly see that there are literally many templates for you to choose from for the instant creation of a site. Just scan through the list and see what you fancy – after you've entered the text you want to see on the page, it'll be automatically sorted for you. We've done it, and it took us about three and a half minutes from start to finish. Go on, it's easy.

And as if that wasn't enough, we've only gone and given you a walloping great guide to the program on our cover-mounted book this month. Life is good.

INSTALL AND SET UP CYBERSITTER

Keep your kiddies from Net nasties with this quality trial version

AFTER POSITIVELY ROMPING home with the coveted Best Buy accolade in our round-up of Net filterers, we felt it only right to give you the opportunity to clean up your act by giving you a trial version of CYBERsitter.

The program works like most other filterers on the market, by checking each site you, or your children, visit for objectionable content. Most of the time it will completely prevent you from accessing the page in the first place, but there are times when CYBERsitter will astound you with its ingenuity and guile.

If you type a search into a search engine, CYBERsitter will give you all the results as normal, only with all of the rudeness taken out.

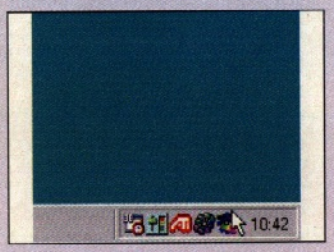
Below is a step by step guide to installing CYBERsitter, then setting it up.

1 Installing the latest parts

When you click the CYBERsitter item in the Software Reviews menu, you'll be connected to the Net so CYBERsitter can download the very latest features for you. As you might imagine, this takes a few minutes, so sit tight.

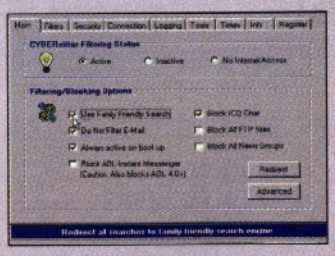
2 Installation complete

After the components have been downloaded, the installation is nearly complete. After you've finished, CYBERsitter will ask if you want your hard drive scanned for objectionable content. We've decided not to.



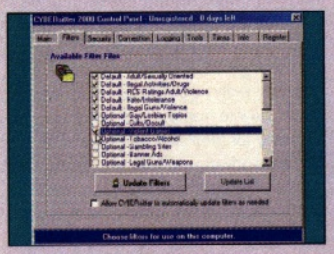
3 Opening the options

From now on, CYBERsitter will be open whenever you start your PC. If you want to access any of the functions and options of the program, double-click on the 'CYBERsitter' icon at the bottom-right of the screen.



4 Changing your options

The main screen of the interface contains handy options. We've gone for a Family Friendly Search so that only nice respectable sites can be found. We've also decided to stop ICQ, so no disreputable types can influence our offspring.



5 The filters

Now click on the 'Filters' tab. This will bring up the list of currently-selected filters, as well as many others for you to get your hands on. Go through these at your leisure – it's better to be safe than sorry.

6 Safer surfing

Click on 'Done', and we're now ready to start browsing the Web. You can leave your kids to connect whenever they choose now, knowing that they're safe from the spectre of seediness raising its ugly head.

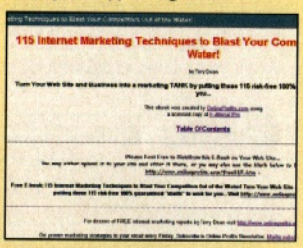
eBook extravaganza

WITH TIPS ON HOW TO WRITE AN EBOOK OR EBOOKS ON HOW TO MAKE MONEY, OUR EBOOK SECTION OF THE COVER DISC WILL EDUCATE AND INFORM YOU

115 Marketing Techniques

eBook, 303Kb

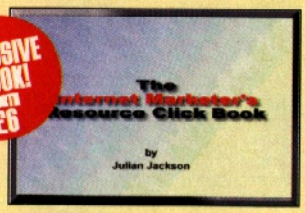
This full length book shows you all of the secret tips and tricks you might never have considered that will make your Web site stand out from the crowd. Not only that, but it'll help you turn that site into the money-spinning marvel that you always knew it could be. Just follow the 115 "risk-free 100% guaranteed" tips to work, sit back and watch your happiness grow.



The Internet Resource Book

eBook, 283Kb

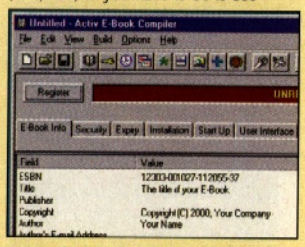
This handy resource gives you the inside info on all of the subjects you need to know about for a successful site. Items like search engine positioning, eCommerce and marketing are covered in depth, so that even those of you with a knowledge beforehand are sure to pick up something new and informative. There are over 60 resources here, all of which can be accessed quickly and easily in this Adobe Acrobat file. When you need information, just open the guide, find what you want, and click on the hotlink.



Create Your Own eBook

Shareware, 1Mb

If you've ever felt that spark of creative genius only a prodigiously talented writer can have, can you write to us at *Practical Internet* and tell us what it's like! Then, when you've done that, get this wonder installed on your PC. Using the usual manner of complex and baffling technologies, Activ eBook Compiler will transform any number of HTML pages into a self-executing file (.exe). So, all you have to do is use

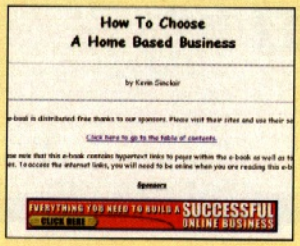


Notepad or the like to generate some basic HTML, and within a few minutes you'll be the proud owner of your very own eBook. Use a bit of nouse, and take some of the tips from the eBooks in this section on board, and you could just be on to a winner. See, we're always thinking of you here – although you'll still have to write your own book to start with.

Start home-based businesses

eBook, 384Kb

This eBook should provide a valuable resource to anyone wishing to jump on that unstoppable eCommerce bandwagon. Having a gander here will teach you all you need to know about choosing which business to go into, how to evaluate any ideas you've ever had, how to manage your time and money for profits and all that kind of crazy madcapness. Basically, having a read of this will soon make you much more equipped to become the next dot com millionaire.



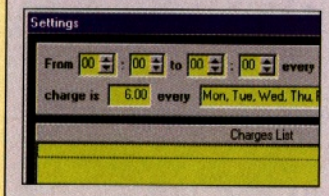
SUPER SURFING

Our cool assortment of goodies, freebies and meta marvels will turn you into the Fonz of the surfing world

ChargeMeter

Freeware, 558Kb

If you're still using one of those damn 0845 services to connect to the Net, you'll probably have found that it tends to cost more than you'd like it to. For some reason, you always end up being online longer than you'd planned – we put it down to the sheer quality and variety of that Norman Wisdom fan site you've marked as your home page. With this bundle of joy, you can track just how much you're actually spending while browsing. Not only that, but you can also keep an archive of how much time you've been online in the past. If you're so inclined, you could even form a detailed history of your online time over a period of months, although we suggest that you don't.



Internet Surfer II

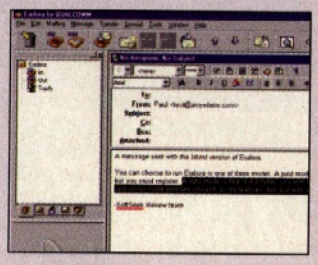
Freeware, 198Kb

If there's one thing that sees Internet Explorer struggling like Ainsley Harriot on the professional table tennis circuit, it's showing more than one window at the same time. Unless you want to start fiddling about with the toolbar at the bottom of the page, it's pretty unpleasant. That's why we're always giving you the chance to use alternative browsers, with all manner of multi-pane action going down. If you're unsure as to whether you should install this baby or not, consider the following: it's free, it's only 198Kb, and it won't affect Internet Explorer at all. Just do it.

Eudora 5

Freeware, 5.99Mb

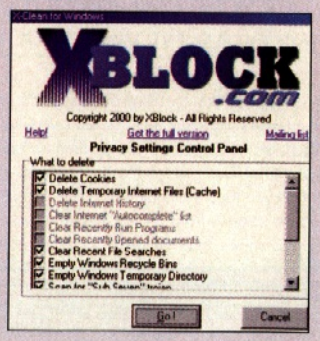
One of the few genuine competitors to the mighty Microsoft Outlook Express, this latest version of Eudora's quality email package is as fine as a particularly fine lace curtain. All of the standard features are there as you'd expect, with added options to move your emails to and from folders, and a generally easier interface for you to use. Best of all, though, is the mood rating system used for both incoming and outgoing messages. Based on their 'hotness' or potential to offend, messages are rated out of three chillies, three being the hottest of course. This has proved a definite winner in our office, with everyone trying to out-chilli each other with offensiveness.



XCleaner

Freeware, 216Kb

Let's face it – there's more dodgy viruses and bugs on the Internet than a cheap B-movie starring Michael Landon. That's why XCleaner could be such a boon for you. Just install it, and let it perform all manner of Internet-related magic on your PC, keeping it as clean as a whistle that's just been soaked in Fairy Liquid overnight. We'll have more on keeping your PC free of viruses and the like in our next issue, but this handy program will tide you



Important Note – RealPlayer 8

Freeware, 216Kb

It has come to our attention that the 30-day trial version of RealPlayer 8 on this month's CD has expired during the making of this issue's *Practical Internet* CD. Apologies for any incovenience caused. For a working version, see **www.real.com.**

Complete index of your disc's contents

Full products

Presto VideoWorks
Fully working, 1.1Mb

Serif WebPlus
Fully working, 67.5Mb

SmartDraw 3
Fully working, 6.3Mb

SurfSaver 1.5
Fully working, 19.8Mb

Browsing

Ad Muncher
Freeware, 28Kb

Adobe Acrobat Reader
Freeware, 5.6Mb

ChargeMeter
Freeware, 558Kb

Email coder
Freeware, 56Kb

Eudora 5
Freeware, 5.99Mb

Free Agent
Freeware, 1Mb

Go!Zilla
Freeware, 1.7Mb

Gooey
Freeware, 1.2Mb

ICQ
Freeware, 6.1Mb

Internet Explorer 5.5
Freeware, 48.8Mb

IE5 Accessories
Freeware, 160Kb

Internet Surfer II
Freeware, 198Kb

Mail Them
Freeware, 600Kb

Netscape Navigator 4.75
Freeware, 20Mb

Netscape Navigator 6 Installer
Freeware, 224Kb

Opera 4.02
30-day trial, 1.81Mb

Outlook Express 5
Freeware, part of IE5 package

Sonique 1.51
Freeware, 1.9Mb

Shockwave/Flash Player
Freeware, 3.11Mb

StayLive 2000
Freeware, 96Kb

WinZip 8
Shareware, 1.2Mb

XCleaner
Freeware, 216Kb

eBooks

115 Internet Marketing
eBook, 303Kb

Create Your Own eBook
Shareware, 1Mb

Start Home-based Businesses
eBook, 384Kb

Internet Resource Book
eBook, 283Kb

Web site Promotion
eBook, 420Kb

ISPs

Abel Internet
Free Net access, 25.9Mb

Madasafish
Free Net access, 109.6Mb

Net Workshop

Christmas emails
Freeware, 755Kb

Macromedia Flash 5
30-day trial, 19Mb

Site Building

160 Graphics Textures
Freeware, 955Kb

61 Free Fonts
Freeware, 1.4Mb

Active Shop
30-day trial, 16.8Mb

Button Artist
Freeware, 658Kb

CoffeeCup FTP
Freeware, 736Kb

CoffeeCup WebCam
21-day trial, 3Mb

Easy Applet Builder
Shareware, 1.65Mb

Font Creator
30-day trial, 1.4Mb

GateKeeper 3.2
Freeware, 205Kb

GIF Construction Set
Shareware, 3.89Mb

GNet Submission
Freeware, 3.2Mb

HotDog Professional 6.2
Shareware, 10.8Mb

HTML Optimizer
Freeware, 466Kb

HTML Tidy
Freeware, 96Kb

Paint Shop Pro 7
30-day trial, 32.8Mb

Pop-Up
Freeware, 861Kb

SmartDraw 5
Trial, 2.9Mb

ThumbPrint Pro
Shareware, 2.80Mb

WML Writer
Trial, 926Kb

Software Reviews

Cyber Patrol
Trial, 1.4Mb

CYBERsitter
Trial, 280Kb

IamBigBrother
Shareware, 1.4Mb

Mac programs

Flash 5 installer
Free Net access, 11.6Mb

Netscape Communicator 4.75
Web browser, 13.3Mb

Shockwave Flash installer
Freeware, 2.7Mb

Abel Internet
Free Net access, 1.5Mb

Eudora 5
Beta, 3.2Mb

Dreamweaver 3
30-day trial, 10.8Mb

Internet Explorer 5.0
Freeware, 11.5Mb

Outlook Express 5.0
Freeware 8Mb

Alladin Expander 5.5
Freeware, 806Kb

Alladin DropStuff 5.5
Freeware 1.5Mb

Download Deputy
Shareware, 68Kb

Debabilizer Lite LE
SE Edition, 562Kb

Anarchie 3.7
Freeware, 1.2Mb

Madasadish
Free Net access, 65.2Mb

Internet Resource Book
Requires Adobe Acrobat Reader

QiQ

The Intelligent E-Business Consultancy

address
20 Market Hill
Rothwell
NN14 6BW

telephone
01536 507 706
e-mail
info@qiq.co.uk
web
www.qiq.co.uk
fax
07970 570 825

QiQ Host an easy way to a quality hosting solution.

QiQ Host is our standard hosting package for individuals and small to medium sized businesses seeking to harness the power of the Internet.

QiQ are also able to offer custom hosting solutions to meet the needs of high bandwidth and technically sophisticated hosting requirements.

Additional QiQ services include:
- Dedicated Servers
- Global Domain Name sales
- E-Commerce
- Website Development

This 12 month hosting package includes:

10mb of fast UK based web space that can be used for commercial purposes.

E-mail support and 24 hour personal telephone answer service.

Web based interface to manage your site and e-mail from the web.

Unlimited email aliasing and forwarding.

Unlimited pop3 mail boxes and auto responders.

CGI and SSI capabilities.

Full FTP access.

Graphical web site statistics.

Front page extensions at no extra charge.

All this for £114 + VAT

QiQ Hosting Clients include:

The Aircraft Owners & Pilots Association
(www.aopa.co.uk)

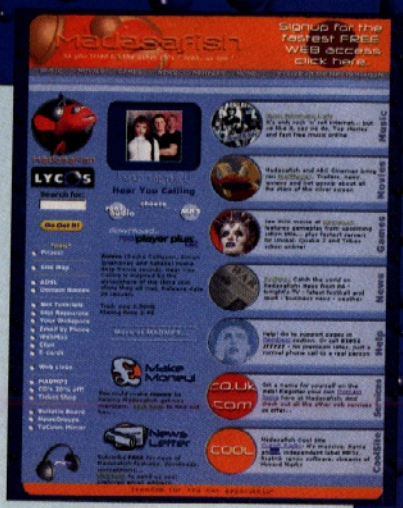
Guardian Security (Leicester) Limited
(www.guardian-security.co.uk)

Tayleur Mayde
(www.tayleurmayde.com)

European General Aviation Safety Foundation
(www.egasf.com)

Net4Nowt
(www.n4n.co.uk)

Rothwell Town
(www.rothwelltown.co.uk)



Madasafish

Madasafish – a fast, free ISP with attitude!

Service provider:	Madasafish
Free time:	Life
Modem speeds:	Up to V.90 and ISDN
Technical support:	09010 222 324
Sales enquiries:	0800 0273 373
URL:	www.madasafish.com
Monthly rate:	Free
Annual rate:	Free
Platforms:	Windows and Mac

MADASAFISH? WHAT KIND of a name's that for a dull, boring thing like an Internet service provider? You want free Internet access, right? Easy. Just go to any old free ISP and you'll get it. But what do you really, really want? Do you want it fast?

If you love music or you live games, and want them fast and free with no other rubbish… you'll be wanting Madasafish. **www.madasafish.com** – the ISP with attitude.

Madasafish is a brand new kind of ISP. It doesn't just give you free Internet access.

Madasafish is the ISP with attitude. It's a place where you can go for fun, for music, for games. It knows what you want from your ISP because it wants it too.

Fast online

Using its CD you can be online in a few minutes. Just put it in your CD-ROM drive. Check out the Mad movie. Follow the easy steps. You'll find yourself surfing with the fish double-plus quick.

A wee hint before you sign up: think of your username and password before you start. Maybe you want to be stunner@madasafish.com (well we think you're lovely anyway). Or you could choose anyname@madasafish.com?

Face it – with Madasafish it's going to be funkier than any name@tiredisp.co.uk – and your password can be can be just as funky as you!

You can give the CD to your friends too, and get them online with us. If you need a CD they're free to order – just call **0800 0273 373.**

You can sign up online. Just go to **www.madasafish.com**. Any way that you want it, the sign up is easy, fast, and best of all, free.

Fast, cheap support

And if you need any help, Madasafish is right there. But it won't bust your bank with call charges for support. The help is cheaper, and better. Call the state-of-the-art Net Centre on **01851 777727** between 8am and 11pm, seven days a week. It faithfully promises that its customer support agents will help you solve your problem as fast as possible. And all for the cost of a normal rate call.

Instant unlimited Web space

Unlike many other ISPs Madasafish gives you UNLIMITED Web space. Web space is where you can build your own Web site, and put on anything you like (well, almost anything…) And because it's a Madasafish virtual place, it can be as big as you like.

Don't know how to build a Web site? It's really pretty easy. For a start, it sets up a home page for you! So if you are "sarahb" – hi Sarah! – your home page address will be **www.madasafish.com/sarahb**.

You create your very own Web pages on your own computer and then fire them off to Madasafish's computers so that anyone can find them on the Internet. That's it – easy peasy. People, with Madasafish you have a cool URL and as much Web space as you can use!

Madasafish gives you the free Internet access. It gives you the free unlimited Web space. It gives you the software you need.

Go for it!

What you get…

1 Now you know it's not like other ISPs. There's no shark practice, just its own slightly irritable mutated sea bass aka Red Dude – so come home to www.madasafish.com.

2 Madasafish gives you music with attitude – its M.A.D. Music Automatic Daily mag with news, reviews, charts, gig info, ticket shop, CD shop + loads of FREE MP3 files…at www.madasafish.com.

3 Fastest ping times ever means silky speed for online games (Quake I, II, III, Tribes…) only with GameRush and its super fast servers… check it out at www.madasafish.com.

4 Madasafish members get as much FREE Web space as they can use, a funky URL – like www.madasafish.com/yourname and it sets up your home page for you! Wanna go unlimited?

5 Come on over to its Mad BBS service, have YOUR say and enjoy the crack on the Web. Members help, chat, special forums on music, games – add your own at www.madasafish.com.

6 Tens of thousands be enough? Check out the wicked Madasafish UseNet service at www.madasafish.com. Come on in the Net's lovely!

What Madasafish offers

- no busy tones
- no downtime
- fastest access on the planet
- unlimited personal email
- unlimited personal Web space
- free games servers
- free mp3 music and movie previews
- free support
- no subscription charge

plus NEW

- fast, low cost domain name registration
- ADSL – even faster Net access!
- phonemail – access your email by phone
- Webmail – send and receive anywhere

Abel Internet

Service provider:	Abel Internet
Free time:	Life
Modem speeds:	Up to 56k (x2, K56Flex, V.90)
Subscription:	Subscription free, business and 0800
Sales enquiries:	sales@abelgratis.co.uk
URL:	sales@abelvisp.co.uk
Monthly rate:	Free
Annual rate:	Free
Platforms:	Win 3.x, 95, 98, NT4, Mac

Ready, willing and Abel to set YOU up as a FREE Internet service provider!

ABEL INTERNET HAS launched a choice of 0800 packages to suit every budget. Abel clients benefit from a choice of packages offering a choice of Peak or Off-Peak and with various payment methods. Watch out also for Abel's new FREE eCommerce facility. For more details about this, visit **www.abelgratis.co.uk**

Businesses and private users will be interested to learn about another first from Abel Internet. Abel believes that any company with a client-base should become a virtual ISP (VISP). Abel can set up your company as an Internet service provider and offer you a re-branded portal facility at minimal expense as well as guaranteeing extra income from Abel's "call-share scheme".

eCommerce facilities come as standard for the VISP and their clients. This is a big step towards customer loyalty and a very efficient way of staying in touch with one's client base.

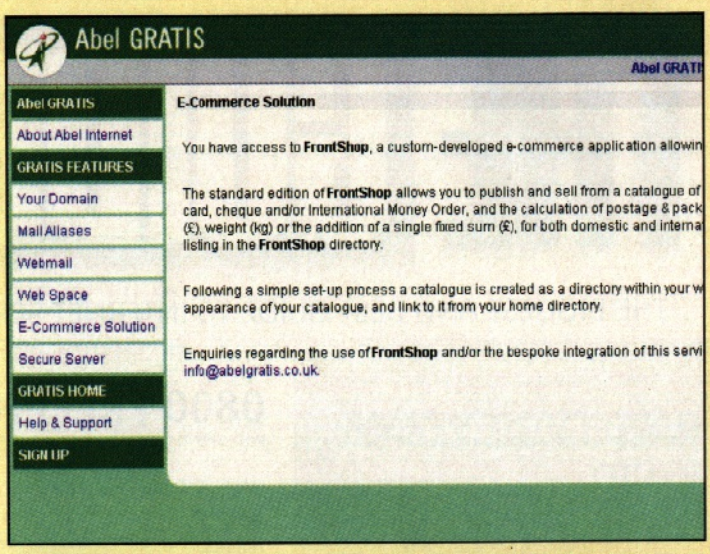
This service is suitable for everybody, no matter how big or how small the client-base may be. For more details visit **www.abelvisp.co.uk**

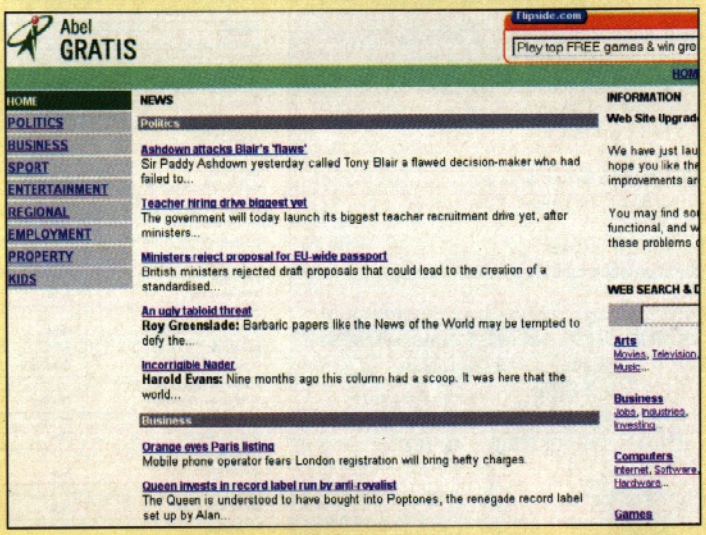
Abel Internet, already well established and respected for its reliable subscription services, also provides a free service offering full Internet access and email facilities on a local call rate number.

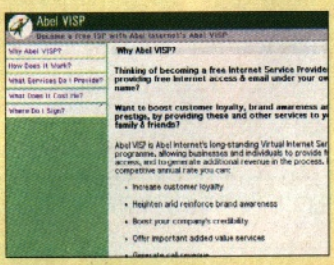
Abel Gratis, Abel's FREE service, offers you full unlimited free access to the Internet with no hidden charges at speeds of up to 56k, V.90 & ISDN, POP and SMTP both ways for email, as well as an unlimited number of multi-user email addresses and aliases. Choosing Abel Gratis will also entitle you to 50Mb free Web space available for personal or business use. Your free Web space includes free Statistical Reports and use of Abel's Secure Server. The really interesting news is that Abel Gratis is the first ISP in the UK to offer all its clients, both business and private, a vast choice of domain addresses to choose from with their free service. This avoids businesses the expense and maintenance of a full domain name. Home and business users have the fun aspect too. For example:

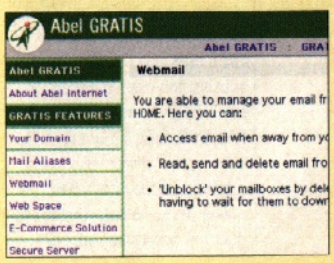
joe@bloggs.net-shopping.org.uk
joe@bloggs.the-office.org.uk
joe@bloggs.far2sexy.co.uk
joe@bloggs.amorous.co.uk
joe@bloggs.oo7.org.uk
joe@bloggs.1to1.org
and hundereds more.

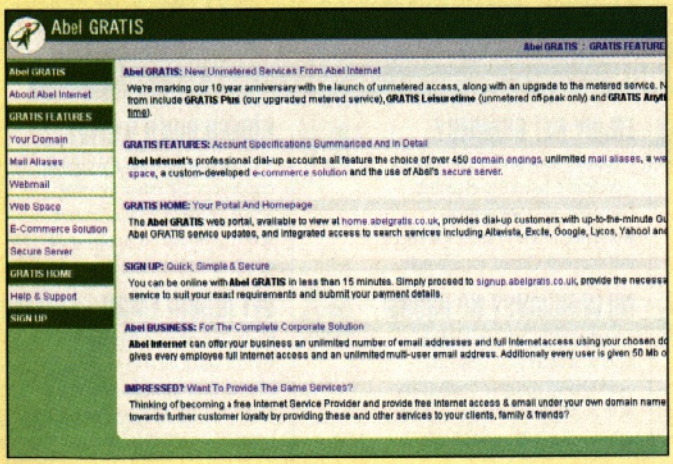
Abel supplies software for Windows, Mac and Amiga. Simply install Abel's software from the cover CD or visit **www.abelgratis.co.uk** to set yourself up online. Abel's clients can additionally access their email via the Web. All Abel clients, regardless of the service they choose, benefit from the free use of Abel's Secure Server.

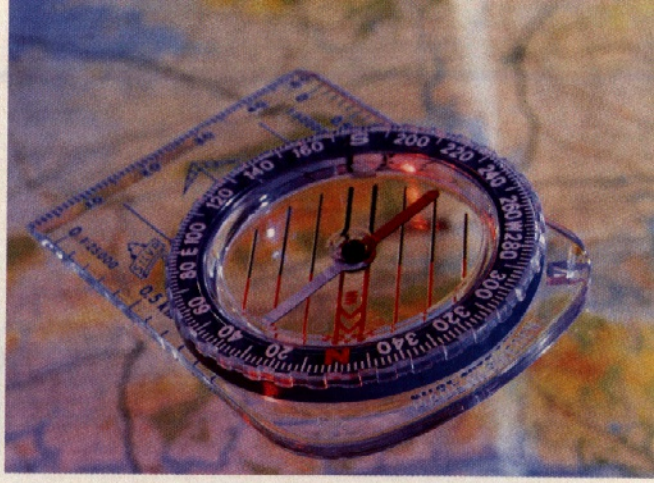












THE GUIDE

THE BIGGEST AND BEST GUIDE TO INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDERS, HARDWARE AND WEB SITES

ISP listings

DIRECTORY 120
If you can't decide which free service provider to sign up with, read our guide.

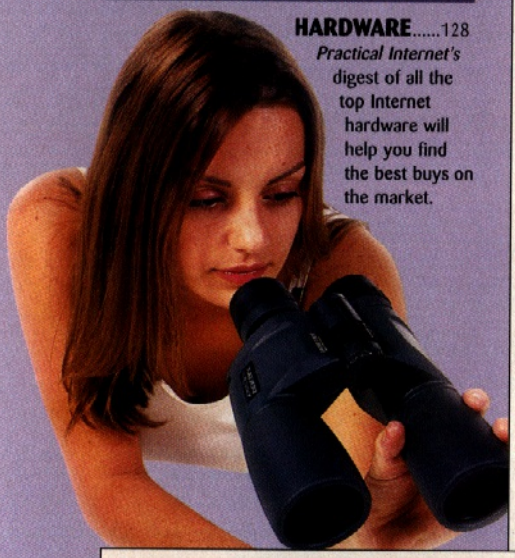
QUICK TESTS 121
Each issue we test a group of different ISPs. This issue, Madasafish TimeZone Total, The Hornets, floom.net, IC24 After Eight, Unisonfree.net, Ministry of Sound and Gamesworld.net are tested.

ISP NEWS BYTES 122, 127
Catch up on the latest ISP news.

HEAD-TO-HEAD 125
Surfing Rabbit and My SurfTime compared.

Buyer's guide

HARDWARE 128
Practical Internet's digest of all the top Internet hardware will help you find the best buys on the market.



0800 FREEPHONE PROVIDERS

WHY SPEND MONEY ON YOUR INTERNET PHONE CALLS WHEN THESE SERVICES OFFER FREEPHONE NET ACCESS?

NAME AND URL	LAUNCH DATE	0800 ACCESS	COST	COMMENTS
0800freedom www.0800freedom.co.uk	2000	24 hour, 7 days a week	n/a	Users will have to display an advertisement banner.
24-7Freecall www.24-7freecall.net	Now	24 hour, 7 days a week	£19.99	BT customers only. No cut-off period. Initially open to 5,000 users.
Affinity www.affinity.uk.com/surftime.htm	Now	24 hour, 7 days a week	£25.99	Provides access to a growing list of ISPs using the BT SurfTime package.
AltaVista Freetime 20 www.altavista.co.uk	Now	Off-peak	£7.99	Also an annual payment option of £60. Uses ClaraNet ISP.
AOL www.aol.co.uk	Now	24 hour, 7 days a week	£14.99	To be offered to existing customers first. Also available to non-BT customers.
AppleOnline www.appleonline.net	October	24 hour, 7 days a week	Various	Uses Surftime package. Off-peak option costs £9.99 per month
Blueyonder www.blueyonder.co.uk	Now	24 hour, 7 days a week	£33	A high speed cable Internet service from Telewest. A one-off installation fee of £50.
breathe www.breathe.com	Now	24 hour, 7 days a week	n/a	£50 one-off fee. Has a 6 hour cut-off period.
BT Internet www.btinternet.com	Now	Evenings and weekends	£9.99	Annual payment option of £109.89 12 months for the price of 11.
ClaraNet www.clara.net	Now	24 hour, 7 days a week	Various	FreeTime unlimited - unmetered access 6pm-2am weekdays and weekends.
Connect FREE www.connectfree.co.uk	Now	24 hour, 7 days a week	Various	24/7 option - £24.99 per month. Off-peak option - £9.99 per month
Demon www.demon.net	October 9	24 hour, 7 days a week	Various	Premier Connect - monthly payments of £11.75 + £5.99. No cut-off period.
EcosseTel (Vroom2) www.ecossetel.co.uk	October	24 hour, 7 days a week	n/a	Annual fee - £49.99. Business use service also available - £14.99 per month
EsatClear www.esatclear.ie	Now	Off-peak	IR£20	For users living in Ireland only.
Euphony.net www.euphony.net	Now	Weekends	£10	Local rate access during the week. Need to download connection software.
Excite www.excite.co.uk	Now	24 hour, 7 days a week	n/a	See TheFreeInternet for details.
F9 premier www.f9.co.uk	Now	Weekends	£9.99	Local rate access at other times.
Freechariot www.freechariot.net	Now	24 hour, 7 days a week	n/a	After a year the registration fee is refunded to spend on-line.
fREEdial www.purplenet.co.uk	Now	Off-peak	Various	Offers different packages starting at £6.49 + VAT per month.
Freedom2Surf www.freedom2surf.net	Now	Off-peak	£9.40	Need to download an application form. Payable by debit or credit card.
FreeISP.uk.com www.freeisp.uk.com	TBA	24 hour, 7 days a week	£15	Pre-registrations are available now and will be given priority.
FreeNet www.freenet.co.uk	Now	Off-peak	£6.99	Payment by credit card or standing order. Uses BT Surftime.
Freeserve Time www.freeserve.net	Now	24 hour, 7 days a week	n/a	Need to spend a minimum of £10 on national/international calls per month.
Freeserve www.freeserve.net	Now	Off-peak	£5.99	Unlimited off-peak access. Has a two hour cut-off period.
Games-World.net www.games-world.net	Now	24 hour, 7 days a week	Various	Uses BT Surftime. See Intensive Networks for details
Go-Free www.gofree.to	Now	Weekends	n/a	Only available in the Milton Keynes and Halifax area.

SEVEN STEPS TO PICK THE IDEAL INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDER

1 CHOOSE YOUR ISP TYPE

0800 FREEPHONE ISPS usually make a monthly subscription charge, but users are not billed for any Net phone charges. **FREE ISPS** don't charge monthly subscription rates, but users do pay local phone rates when online. **PAY ISPS** make a monthly subscription charge. Users also pay local phone rates when online. They are fast, reliable and offer top quality tech support

2 GETTING SPEEDY HELP

If you're new to the Net, you will make lots of calls to the ISP's telephone helpline – so pick one with low cost support. See our listings for the prices.

3 GOT KIDS?

Pick ISPs like AOL which filter content, or use 'kids-only' ISPs like KidzNet (**www.kidz.co.uk**). Alternatively, get PC censor software that works with all ISPs.

4 ENJOY NET GAMING?

If you're a keen online game player, a dedicated fast ISP is essential. GamesWorld (**www.games-world.net**) is one of several services that supports Quake, for example.

5 NO WINDOWS? NO PROBS!

Freeserve, BT Click and Demon work well with Linux, while Mac users should consider Madasafish, AOL or AbelGratis. Windows NT is suited well to MSN and BigWig.

6 GONNA BUILD A SITE?

If you intend to build a Web site, check your ISP offers free Web space. Some provide unlimited space (2Mb will be ample) while others offer free domain names.

7 GET GLOBAL EMAIL

If your ISP offers a Webmail service you'll be able to access your email from anywhere in the world through a Web browser. This is handy for travellers and tourists.

IN ASSOCIATION WITH www.net4nowt.com net4nowt

NAME AND URL	LAUNCH DATE	0800 ACCESS	COST	COMMENTS
GreatXscape www.greatxscape.com	Now	Off-peak	n/a	Need to transfer telephone line over to Telnet.
ic24 www.ic24.net	Now	9am - 5pm weekends	n/a	Local rate at other times. Offer ends 31st October. Has a 1-hour cut-off.
icScotland www.icscotland.net	Now	9am - 5pm weekends	n/a	Local rate at other times. Offer ends 30th September. Has a 1-hour cut-off.
IG Click www.igclick.co.uk	Now	24 hour, 7 days a week	n/a	One-off registration fee of £50 plus yearly fee of £30
Intensive Networks www3.intensive.net	Now	24 hour, 7 days a week	Various	Offers various priced packages using the Surftime offer from BT.
KeConnect www.keconnect.co.uk	Now	24 hour, 7 days a week	£29.95	Only available for NTL cable customers. 3 hour disconnect
LibertySurf www.libertysurf.co.uk	Now	Off-peak	n/a	Currently providing the service to existing members only, for an annual fee of £20.
LibneOne www.lineone.net	Now	Off-peak	£9.99	Use BT Surftime package, so you must be a BT customer.
Madasafish www.madasafish.com	Now	24 hour, 7 days a week	Various	Need to be an existing Madasafish user. Has a 4-hour cut-off period. BT customers only
MySurftime www.mysurftime.com	19 October	24 hour, 7 days a week	Various	No cut-off period. Various packages available including business options.
ntlworld www.ntlworld.com	Now	24 hour, 7 days a week	n/a	Free for NTL cable customers as part of TV/phone package.
PlusNet www.plus.net	Now	24 hour, 7 days a week	Various	24/7 - £25.98, Off-peak - £11.98. Both options include CGI and FrontPage support.
RedHotAnt.com www.redhotant.com	Now	24 hour, 7 days a week	n/a	£40 registration fee plus, £30pa for 'Basic' package or £90pa for 'Superior' package.
Sniff Out www.sniffout.net	October	24 hour, 7 days a week	Various	Uses BT Surftime package.
StrayDuck www.strayduck.com	Now	24 hour, 7 days a week	n/a	One week of 0800 access in three depending on average 0845 use
SupaNet www.supanet.com	TBA	24 hour, 7 days a week	n/a	Just completed their trial. Further details available when service is launched.
Surfing Rabbit www.surfingrabbit.com	Now	24 hour, 7 days a week	£9.99	Monthly subscription fees are payable in advance by Credit/Debit card only.
Telewest SurfUnlimited www.telewest.co.uk	Now	24 hour, 7 days a week	£10	Customers will need Telewest line and spend at least £10 a month on voice calls.
TheFreeInternet www.thefreeinternet.net	Now	24 hour, 7 days a week	n/a	Costs £89.99 per year. Has a 1-hour cut-off period.
Tiny Online www.tinyconnect.co.uk	TBA	24 hour, 7 days a week	£25.99	No minimum spend on voice calls. Dialler provided for free.
Totalise www.totalisetelecom.net	Now	24 hour, 7 days a week	n/a	Has a 1-hour cut-off. Not available for business use.
UKRTC www.ukrtc.net	TBA	24 hour, 7 days a week	£19.99	No cut-off period and special rates for 128K access.
Virgin www.virgin.net	Now	24 hour, 7 days a week	£15	Service currently put on hold.
Vispa Connect www.vispaconnect.co.uk	November	24 hour, 7 days a week	TBA	Further details to be announced nearer launch.
World Online www.worldonline.co.uk	Now	24 hour, 7 days a week	n/a	Need to join World Online Telecom. £20 fee and line rental of £14.99 per month.
X-Stream www.x-stream.co.uk	Now	Off-peak	n/a	Need to display an advertisement banner. Has a 2 hour cut-off period.
Zoom www.zoom.co.uk	Now	24 hour, 7 days a week	n/a	A one-off fee of £10. Will also need to spend £20 per quarter on shopping online.

FREE ISP DIRECTORY

YOUR AT-A-GLANCE GUIDE TO SUBSCRIPTION-FREE ISPS WHICH CHARGE ONLY FOR LOCAL CALL RATES

NAME AND URL	EMAIL ADDRESSES	WEB SPACE	NEWS GROUPS	SUPPORT COSTS	64k ISDN	128K ISDN
1jena.com www.1jena.com	Unlimited	25Mb	Yes	Local rate	Yes	Yes
4TheNet www.4thenet.co.uk	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	75p	Yes	Yes
4u2give www.4u2give.com	1	None	No	Normal BT rate	Yes	Yes
Abel Gratis www.abelgratis.co.uk	Unlimited	50Mb	Yes	25p	Yes	Yes
Ace Internet www.ace-internet.co.uk	10	5Mb	Yes	National rate	Yes	Yes
Adaption Software www.adaption-software.com/freenet.htm	Unlimited	100Mb	No	25p	Yes	No
Alkazar Internet www.alkazar.net	5	Unlimited	Yes	50p	Yes	No
AltaVista Net on Demand www.altavista.co.uk	Unlimited	10Mb	Yes	Local BT rate	Yes	No
Amlink www.amlink.co.uk	Unlimited	250Mb	Yes	Normal BT rate, 75p	Yes	No
Angels www.angels.org.uk	5	10Mb	Yes	-	Yes	No
AngliaNet http://free.anglianet.co.uk	Fee payable	Fee payable	No	Normal BT rate	Yes	No
AppleOnline www.appleonline.net	Unlimited	25Mb	Yes	National rate	Yes	Yes
Arcinter.net www.arcinter.net	5	10Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	No
ArsenalNet www.arsenal.co.uk	5	5Mb	No	50p	Yes	No
Barclays Bank www.is.barclays.co.uk	5	No	No	National rate	No	No
Barlick.net www.barlick.net	Unlimited	Unlimited	No	75p	Yes	Yes
Barrysworld www.barrysworld.com	Unlimited	No	Yes	-	Yes	No
Beebware www.beebware.com	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	National rate	Yes	Yes
BigWig www.bigwig.net	7	15Mb	Yes	£1	Yes	Yes

0800 ISP QUICK TEST

Madasafish TimeZone Total

www.madasafish.com

RENOWNED UK WEB funsters Madasafish recently launched a brace of packages designed to offer 0800 access to a desparate public. TimeZone Lite provides the cheapskates out there with off-peak access for £12, TimeZone Total lets you surf 24/7 for £27.99 a month.

Practical internet BEST BUY ★★★★★

Signing up ★★★★

Anyone who's ever tried to sign up to an 0800 account will know the score – sign up for boring 0845 access, and get your name down pronto for the free action. Madasafish is only taking on a limited number of new people to the freecall access every month, so we suspect that you might be waiting a bit of time.

Connecting ★★★★★

If an ISP has ever depressed you, take consolation in this fact – connecting to the Madasafish freecall number is easy and useful. After a good while using the service, we had encountered no connection problems whatsoever, and Madasafish's promise of a four hour cut-off was as true as Spandau Ballet's chart-topper from 1983.

Features ★★★★★

As you've got to sign up for the standard Madasafish account first off, you're privvy to the usual glut of Web space and email accounts. The technical support line is only charged at normal call rates, despite being based in Scotland. As well as being sorted by knowledgable and helpful people, you can also talk about the plight of Hamilton Accies after their nightmare relegation to the Scottish Third Division.

Overall ★★★★★

One of the more reliable freecall services on the market at this moment in time, Madasafish TimeZone Total is only hampered by the astronomical price. While David Beckham could no doubt afford £28 a month, we mere mortals might be better off looking into the vastly more affordable TimeZone Lite package.

"We encountered no connection problems"

net4nowt IN ASSOCIATION WITH www.net4nowt.com

FREE ISP QUICK TEST

The Hornets

www.hornets.net

IF YOU'RE FOLLOWING the constant promotion/relegation battles of Sir Elton's Watford boys, you can plough your hard-earned cash into the club which famously didn't buy any new players when in the Premier League, and was quickly relegated.

Practical internet BEST BUY ★★★★★

Ease of use ★★★★★

Signing up to the service will take you no time at all. Give your details, choose a username and password, and before you know it, you're on Cilla's *Surprise Surprise* being introduced to your long lost uncle Bob. Download the Internet Settings file, which takes about 1.5 seconds, and you're a fully non-paid-up member of the Hornets ISP.

Tech support ★★★★

The Hornets site is one of the most beginner friendly you'll find, with a large number of online help pages. Considering the technical helpline **(0906 690 3302)** costs a beefy 50p a minute, we hoped Sir Elton of John himself would be manning the lines, but alas no. Having said that, the peeps on the line are very good.

Features ★★★★★

Okay, we'll admit it straight off. This ISP was always going to get top marks as soon as we clapped eyes on the stunning pic of Sir Elton on the home page. The site itself is actually pretty decent, although there seemed to be some kind of confusion as to whether this was the official Watford site. Should you be inclined to set up a Graham Taylor appreciation site, you'll get 20Mb of Web space to tinker around with.

Overall ★★★★★

As fans of the phlegmatic Graham Taylor, the dynamic and ebullient Elton John (Sir, of course), as well as the perennial struggle of occasional achievers Watford FC, this is a dream ISP for us. If, however, you're a killjoy type who doesn't go a bundle for any of the above, this will probably leave you about as cold as Sir Elton's ex-wife, stood outside a big coat shop in Russia, waiting to buy a big coat.

"This site is one of the most beginner friendly you'll find"

NAME AND URL	NO. OF EMAILS	WEB SPACE	NEWS GROUPS	SUPPORT COSTS	64k ISDN	128k ISDN
Biz Online www.bizonline.net	5	5Mb	Yes	Local rate	Yes	No
Blue Carrots www.bluecarrots.com	5	20Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	Yes
Blue Cross Net www.bluecross-free.net	5	10Mb	No	50p	Yes	No
Boots Systems www.boots.com	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	75p	Yes	No
BoSinternet www.bosinternet.com	5	No	No	50p	Yes	No
BoyzNow www.boyznow.com	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	National rate	No	No
Breathe www.breathe.com	5	10Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	No
BreWorld www.breworld.net	5	5Mb	Yes	National rate	No	No
British Library Net www.britishlibrary.net	Unlimited	20Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	No
BromleyNet www.bromleynet.co.uk	1 + Unlimited Webmail	30Mb	No	-	Yes	Yes
Businessserve www.businessserve.co.uk	5	20Mb	No	Normal BT rate	Yes	No
Buy & Sell Net www.buyandsell.net	Unlimited	20Mb	Yes	50p	No	No
Cable & Wireless Lite www.cwcom.net	5	20Mb	Yes	50p	No	No
CallnetUK www.callnetuk.com	5	20Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	Yes
Care4free www.care4free.net	5	15Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	No
CBlue Internet www.cblue.com	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	60p	Yes	No
CharityVfree www.charityvfree.com	Unlimited	15Mb	Yes	Local rate	No	No
CheapNet www.cheapnet.co.uk	Unlimited	75Mb	Yes	National rate	Yes	No
Citibank www.citibank.com/uk	1 Webmail	No	No	50p	No	No
ClaraNet www.claranet.co.uk	Unlimited	50Mb	Yes	Local rate	Yes	No
Club 24 Internet www.club24.co.uk	Unlimited	20Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	Yes
Comundo www.comundo.co.uk	Webmail	12Mb (Tripod)	No	50p	Yes	No
Connect4free www.connect4free.net	Unlimited	20Mb	Yes	-	Yes	Yes
ConnectFree www.connectfree.net	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	50p	Yes	Yes
ContactBox www.contactbox.co.uk	Unlimited	25Mb	Yes	£1	Yes	Yes
ConX www.conx.co.uk	Unlimited	20Mb	Yes	National rate	Yes	Yes
Dabsol www.dabsol.co.uk	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	50p	Yes	No
DellNet http://dellnet.excite.co.uk	Webmail	No	No	50p	Yes	No
Devilnet UK www.devilnet.co.uk	Unlimited	25Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	Yes
Dial Start www.dialstart.net	Unlimited	20Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	No
Dizzi www.dizzi.net	Unlimited	25Mb	Yes	25p	Yes	Yes
DK.net www.dknet.co.uk	5	50Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	No
Doctors.Net www.doctors.net.uk	1	3Mb	No	Local rate	Yes	No

ISP NEWS

MO' MONEY, MO' BLUES FOR ONLINE PUNTERS

Just when it looked like the freecall ISP market might sort itself out for a bit, and finally start treating us weary customers the way we deserve, along comes news that World Online has hiked up its prices. While those who signed up only months ago might have been happy to pay a fiver a month (as well as line rental), they're now being asked to fork out £14.99 before the line rental. Not only that, but the ISP has cut the number of hours available, formerly unlimted, to a meagre 100 hours a month. Call us Mystic Meg, but we can see a fair few people leaving the service sharpish with this kind of news.

EARLY CHRISTMAS GIFT FROM IC24

In news that will be greeted with no surprise whatsoever, ic24 has revealed that its unmetered service will run until the end of the year. The service, which was due to end in October, has been on a rolling two-month 'catch it before it goes' style deadline for some time, and was expanded recently to include weekday access as well. Read our review of the ic24 'After Eight' service on page 125.

JINGS, CRIVVENS, HELP M'BOAB

With cries of 'nae tartan, nae shortbread' the Jings! service has been launched to finally provide Scottish people with a stereotype-free ISP. The service, at **www.jings.com**, contains both 0845 and freecall packages.

IN ASSOCIATION WITH www.net4nowt.com net4nowt

NAME AND URL	NO. OF EMAILS	WEB SPACE	NEWS GROUPS	SUPPORT COSTS	64K ISDN	128K ISDN
Doodah www.doodah.co.uk	25	Unlimited	Yes	£1	Yes	Yes
EarthLink www.earthlink.co.uk	Unlimited	25Mb	No	75p	Yes	Yes
Ecosse www.ecosse.net	Unlimited	Unlimited	No	-	Yes	Yes
EidosNet www.eidosnet.co.uk	Unlimited	20Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	Yes
E Plus www.e-plus.co.uk	Unlimited	15Mb	Yes	National rate	Yes	No
Esat Clear www.esatclear.ie	Unlimited	10Mb	Yes	58p	No	No
Euphony.net www.euphony.net	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	50p	Yes	Yes
Eurobell www.eurobell.net	Unlimited	5Mb	Yes	Normal BT rate	No	No
F.I.S. www.freeispshares.co.uk	Unlimited	25Mb	Yes	National rate	Yes	Yes
f9 www.f9.net.uk	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	National rate	Yes	Yes
Farming Online www.farming.co.uk	Unlimited	No	Yes	50p	Yes	Yes
Fire-Bug www.fire-bug.com	Unlimited	50Mb	Yes	-	Yes	Yes
Floom.net www.floom.net	None	None	No	-	Yes	No
Flyer Internet http://internet.flyer.co.uk	Unlimited	25Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	Yes
Free Gratis www.freegratis.net	5	5Mb	Yes	Normal BT rate	Yes	Yes
Free ISP www.freeisp.co.uk	Unlimited	25Mb	Yes	-	Yes	Yes
Free UK www.freeuk.net	Unlimited	25Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	No
Free2000 www.free2000.co.uk	Webmail	No	Yes	-	Yes	Yes
Free4All www.free4all.co.uk	Unlimited	25Mb	Yes	Local rate	Yes	Yes
Free4Business www.free4business.com	Unlimited	25Mb	Yes	Local rate	Yes	Yes
Freebeeb www.beeb.net	Unlimited	20Mb	Yes	60p	Yes	No
Freecall-UK www.freecall-uk.co.uk	Unlimited	No	Yes	25p	Yes	Yes
FreeCheck www.freecheck.net	5	No	Yes	-	Yes	Yes
Freedom 2 Surf www.freedom2surf.net	Unlimited	25Mb	Yes	Normal BT rate	Yes	Yes
FreeDotNet www.thefree.net	5	5Mb	Yes	Local rate	Yes	No
FreeInternet www.free-internet.co.uk	5	10Mb	Yes	50p	No	No
Free'N'Easy www.freeneasy.net	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	Normal BT rate	Yes	Yes
FreeNet www.freenet.co.uk	Unlimited	25Mb	Yes	National rate	Yes	Yes
Freenetname www.freenetname.co.uk	Unlimited	20Mb	Yes	Free	Yes	No
Freeola.net www.freeola.net	Unlimited	25Mb	Yes	National rate	Yes	Yes
FreeOnline www.free-online.net	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	National rate	Yes	No
Freeserve www.freeserve.net	Unlimited	15Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	No
Freeway UK www.freewayuk.com	5	20Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	Yes
Freewebaccess www.freewebaccess.co.uk	Unlimited	20Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	Yes
Freewire www.freewire.net	Unlimited	50Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	No
FreeZone www.freezone.co.uk	Unlimited	20Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	Yes
FriendFactory www.friendfactory.co.uk	1	15Mb	No	-	No	No
FSBDial www.fsbdial.co.uk	Unlimited	None	Yes	National rate	Yes	Yes
Games Terminal www.gterminal.net	Unlimited	20Mb	Yes	National rate	No	No
Games-World www.games-world.net	1	10Mb	Yes	National rate	Yes	Yes
Gateway www.gateway2000.co.uk	5	15Mb	Yes	£1	Yes	Yes
Gay Webmasters Guild http://gay.webmastersguild.co.uk	20	Negotiable	No	National rate	Yes	Yes
GayServe www.gayserve.co.uk	Unlimited	25Mb	Yes	25p	Yes	Yes
Genie Internet www.genie.co.uk	1	20Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	No
Get Free Internet www.getfreeinternet.co.uk	Unlimited	5Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	Yes
Get-The-Web www.get-the-web.com	Unlimited	100Mb	No	25p	Yes	No
Global Nomad www.globalnomad.co.uk	1	No	No	50p	Yes	No
GoFree www.gofree.co.uk	Unlimited	20Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	Yes
Go-Free www.gofree.to	5	10Mb	No	50p	Yes	No
Go-Legend www.go-legend.net	Unlimited	10Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	Yes
Golfzone www.golfzone.co.uk	5	10Mb	Yes	50p	No	No

FREE ISP >>>>>>>>>>>
QUICK TEST

floom.net

www.floom.net

DESIGNED TO OFFER no-frills ISP action to the more experienced user out there, floom.net has less features than most. One thing to remember, though, is that the whole operation is run by a 15-year-old bloke called Mark. We're all for enterprising youth, so we thought we'd give the service a fair crack at the whip.

Ease of use ★★★

No matter how much we willed the bloody thing to work, we found it difficult and fiddly to sign up to the service. In fact, after about ten minutes of trying, we had to give up. The problem was that we'd entered a username, then was told there was a server error. When we went back to try again, we were told that the username was taken – by us, we presume.

Tech support ★★

If we could simply write 'not applicable' here, we would. Online support is minimal, and there ain't even a sniff of a telephone helpline. After all, this is aimed at those who know their way about the ISP field. And anyway, give the guy a break – he's only 15. Were you running your own ISP at that age? No, you were hanging about outside chip shops.

Features ★★

Unfortunately, Mark hasn't got round to setting up Web space for his willing punters yet. When all is said and done, we found the opportunity to buy a 'floom.net' T-shirt on the home page slightly disconcerting. As the lad tells you on his home page, though, this is a no frills service, aimed at those who want access pure and simple.

Overall ★★★

While this is hardly likely to win any awards for its innovation or stunning range of features, it's a good example of how easy it has become to break into the ISP market. We're full of praise for any 15-year-old boy who doesn't spend his every waking moment dreaming about what he'd like to do to Britney Spears on a desert island.

"Designed to offer no-frills ISP action to the more experienced user"

net4nowt IN ASSOCIATION WITH www.net4nowt.com

FREE ISP QUICK TEST

Unisonfree.net

www.unisonfree.net

IF YOU'RE LIKE neo-Marxist-socialist *Practical Internet* Features Editor Robin 'Red' Lewis, you'll love the Unisonfree ISP. Run by Unison, the biggest trade union in the United Kingdom, there's all the usual kind of freebies up for grabs, as well as repeated attempts to get you to join the ranks of said trade union.

Ease of use ★★★★

Although the site is teaming with pleas to join the union, we were very impressed to find that the actual ISP sign-up was hassle-free. In fact, the process is over in a flash, and that includes the installation file to make your PC Unison-friendly. The whole site is well-designed, and aims to sort even the newest of socialist Net scavengers with little in the way of aggro.

Tech support ★★★★

We've seen some mighty technical help pages on ISP sites in our time, but this takes the factory that makes the machinery that makes the biscuit. Not only do they try their very bestest to prevent you ever needing to call the hotline, but it even makes jokes about how much it costs on the site – and even then, it's only a measly 25p a minute.

Features ★★★★★

The Unisonfree home page is as bland as a keynote speech, but it does contain a link direct to the Unison site itself, which is a tad more lively, although we were worried about turning into a political activist after spending ten minutes on it. The unlimited Web space should please most of you, and unlimited email addresses will be more than enough for you to organise picket lines from your home.

Overall ★★★★

Despite its tendencies to educate you at every whim in the qualities of joining the UK's biggest and brightest union, this is a damn fine ISP. It's got all the extras you need, and you can tell deep down that there's all manner of money been pumped into this baby to make it a hot service for the nation to fall back on.

"This is a damn fine ISP. It's got loads of extras"

NAME AND URL	NO. OF EMAILS	WEB SPACE	NEWS GROUPS	SUPPORT COSTS	64K ISDN	128K ISDN
GoThere Internet www.gothere.uk.com	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	25p	Yes	Yes
GPAnet www.gpanet.co.uk	Unlimited	25Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	Yes
Greatxscape www.greatxscape.com	Unlimited	12Mb	Yes	Normal BT rate	Yes	No
G-Wizz www.g-wizz.net	8	10Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	No
Hairtel www.hairtel.net	Unlimited Webmail	Yes	No	-	No	No
Handbag.com www.handbag.com	20	None	No	50p	Yes	No
HantsLife www.hantslife.co.uk	Yes	20Mb	No	-	No	No
HBC21 www.hbc21.com	No	No	No	-	No	No
Hemscott.net www.hemscott.net	5	20Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	No
Here.co.uk http://portal.here.co.uk	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	National rate	Yes	Yes
HMV http://hmv.yahoo.co.uk	Unlimited Webmail	No	No	50p	Yes	No
Hotlinks www.hotlinks.co.uk	No	No	No	National rate	Yes	Yes
Hot-Toast www.hot-toast.com	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	50p	Yes	No
i12 www.i12.com	Unlimited	500Mb	Yes	National rate	Yes	Yes
iC24 www.ic24.net	5	10Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	No
ICLWAY www.iclway.co.uk	5	15Mb	No	Local rate	Yes	No
Icom43 www.icom43.net	Unlimited	15Mb	No	75p	Yes	No
In2Home www.in2home.net/signup	5	15Mb	Yes	60p	Yes	No
Indigo www.indigo.ie	1	5Mb	Yes	58p	Yes	No
iNet Wales www.inet-wales.co.uk	Webmail only	No	No	50p	Yes	Yes
Intelynx www.intelynx.net	Unlimited	20Mb	Yes	75p	Yes	Yes
InternetHyperGate (coming soon) www.internethypergate.com	?	?	No	?	No	No
Internet-Today www.internet-today.co.uk	Unlimited	15Mb	Yes	75p	Yes	No
Intu www.intu.co.uk	Unlimited	25Mb	Yes	25p	Yes	No
IofM.net www.iofm.net	Unlimited	Unlimited	No	50p	Yes	Yes
IP Free www.ipfree.co.uk	Unlimited	10Mb	Yes	-	Yes	Yes
Islam Direct www.islamdirect.com	5	20Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	Yes
IXUK www.ixuk.com	Unlimited	20Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	Yes
Jolt www.jolt.co.uk	Unlimited	Unlimited	No	-	Yes	No
JungleLink www.junglelink.net	Unlimited	10Mb	Yes	50p	No	No
Kickon www.kickon.com	10	15Mb	No	60p	No	No
Kirion www.kirion.com	Unlimited	25Mb	Yes	75p	Yes	Yes
Knowall www.knowall.co.uk	?	10Mb	No	?	No	No
KZuk.net www.kzuk.net	Unlimited	Unlimited	No	50p	No	No
Learnfree www.learnfree.co.uk	Unlimited	25Mb	Yes	50p	No	No
LibertySurf www.libertysurf.co.uk	Unlimited	25Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	No
Lifestyle www.lifestyle.co.uk	Unlimited	25Mb	Yes	75p	Yes	Yes
LineOne www.lineone.net	5	50Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	Yes
Loyal Mail www.loyalmail.co.uk	Unlimited	25Mb	Yes	Free	Yes	No
Madasafish www.madasafish.com	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	Normal BT rate	Yes	No
Madhouse Net www.madhousenet.co.uk	5	25Mb	Yes	Local rate	Yes	Yes
ManUFree.net www.manutd.com/manufreenet	5	20Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	No
Max2 www.max2.co.uk	Unlimited	25Mb	Yes	£1	Yes	Yes
Mersinet www.mersinet.co.uk	Unlimited	25Mb	Yes	25p	Yes	Yes
Messages www.messages.co.uk	Unlimited	25Mb	Yes	-	Yes	No
Millionserve www.millionserve.net	Unlimited	25Mb	Yes	75p	Yes	Yes
Ministry of Sound www.ministryofsound.net	Unlimited	20Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	No
Minx www.minx.co.uk	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	75p	Yes	Yes
MSN Freeweb www.msnfreeweb.co.uk	Webmail	No	No	National rate	No	No
MT Click www.mtclick.com	Webmail	No	No	-	Yes	No
MWfree.net www.mwfree.net	Unlimited	20Mb	Yes	50p	No	No

IN ASSOCIATION WITH www.net4nowt.com net4nowt

NAME AND URL	NO. OF EMAILS	WEB SPACE	NEWS GROUPS	SUPPORT COSTS	64K ISDN	128K ISDN
My ISP www.myisp.co.uk	Unlimited	20Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	No
NASCR www.nascr.net	Unlimited	20Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	No
Nationwide www.nationwide.co.uk	5	10Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	No
Natwest.com www.natwest.com	Webmail	No	No	50p	Yes	No
Nebular Internet www.nebular.co.uk	Unlimited	25Mb	Yes	Local rate	Yes	Yes
NetDirect Online www.instant.ndo.com	Unlimited	20Mb	Yes	National rate	Yes	Yes
Netgames UK www.netgames.org.uk	Unlimited	25Mb	Yes	National rate	Yes	No
Netscape Online www.netscapeonline.co.uk	Unlimited	20Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	No
NextCall.net www.nextcall.net	5	15Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	No
NHS People www.nhspeople.net	5	15Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	No
NIreland.net www.nireland.net	3	10Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	No
Nofee www.nofee.co.uk	Unlimited Webmail	Unlimited	No	National rate	Yes	No
Nownet www.nownet.co.uk	5	15Mb	Yes	?	No	No
NTL World www.ntlworld.com	5	10Mb	Yes	£1	No	No
Oceanfree www2.oceanfree.net	Unlimited	No	No	£1	Yes	No
Oik www.oik.co.uk	5	No	Yes	£1	Yes	Yes
Onet www.onet.co.uk	Unlimited	30Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	No
Online-Direct www.online-direct.net	Unlimited	20Mb	No	-	Yes	Yes
Orange.net www.orange.net	1	15Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	No
OrchidServe www.orchidserve.com	Unlimited	20Mb	No	75p	Yes	Yes
Oxfam www.oxfam.org.uk	Webmail	No	No	50p	Yes	No
Oxfree www.oxfree.com	Unlimited	20Mb	Yes	Normal BT rate	Yes	Yes
PeoplesNet www.peoplesnet.net	5	25Mb	Yes	-	Yes	No
Photoshot www.photoshot.com	5	15Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	No
POBox www.pobox.co.uk	1	None	No	-	Yes	No
Prontoserve www.prontoserve.net	Unlimited	25Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	Yes
PublicOnline www.publiconline.net	5	5Mb	Yes	Local rate	Yes	No
Quista www.rbos.co.uk/quista	5	10Mb	Yes	-	Yes	No
RapiDial www.rapidial.co.uk	Unlimited	25Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	Yes
Route56 www.route56.co.uk	Unlimited	5Mb	Yes	Normal BT rate	Yes	Yes
RugbyWeb www.rugbyweb.co.uk	Unlimited	20Mb	Yes	50p	No	No
RYA On-Line www.rya-online.net	Unlimited	10Mb	No	50p	Yes	No
SAFC.net www.sunderland-afc.com	Unlimited	15Mb	Yes	£1	No	No
Scannet www.scannet.co.uk	3	5Mb	Yes	-	Yes	Yes
SchoolVfree www.schoolvfree.com	Unlimited	15Mb	Yes	Local rate	No	No
Scotfree-UK www.scotfree-uk.net	5	25Mb	Yes	60p	Yes	Yes

HEAD TO HEAD SURFING RABBIT Vs MYSURFTIME

TWO FREEPHONE ISPs COMPARED

SurfingRabbit		MySurftime
www.surfingrabbit.com	**URL**	www.mysurftime.com
No	**Is there a set up charge?**	No
£9.99	**Monthly charges?**	£35.98
24/7	**When do you get free access?**	24/7
Yes	**Are Macs supported?**	Yes
5	**Number of POP3 email accounts?**	6
10Mb	**Amount of free Web space?**	Have to pay
n/a	**What is the cut-off time?**	n/a

0800 ISP QUICK TEST

IC24 After Eight

www.ic24.net

OFFERING THE BOUNTY of totally free Net access for 36 hours a week, IC24's After Eight allows you to connect and surf without ever having to dip your hands into your pockets. This new service could be the answer to those who refuse to bow to the superiority of freecall access.

Signing up ★★★★★

We arrived on the site as complete ic24 virgins, and were fully experienced and accessed up within ten minutes. Okay, you've got to sign up for an 0845 account first but, having done this, you're just a Settings file away from the glory of 0800 action. It's safe to say that we've probably only seen two things in life easier than this in the past couple of months.

Connecting ★

How astonished were we when we spent half an hour trying to connect without success? Well, not at all really. If you offer the world and his brother completely free Internet access, you're going to have some pretty busy phone lines on your hands. We can imagine a lot of potential punters tearing their hair out and cursing wildly at the nightmare of failed connections.

Features ★★★★

Well, having signed up for a bogstandard ic24 account just to get a whiff of freecall access, you're already joined up to a mighty ISP, which will give you all sorts of goodies to tempt you from leaving their grasp. Help on the site is simple to understand, although hardly comprehensive, and the technical support on offer via the gift of the telephone is efficient, although it will set you back a hefty 50p a minute.

Overall ★★★

You've got to hand it to ic24 for even attempting to provide the oft-spoken of, but always elusive, totally free Internet access. They'll no doubt increase their subscription rates by millions with such a ploy but, considering it's nigh on impossible to get connected in the first place, we can't envisage many happy users.

"Help on the site is simple to understand but not comprehensive"

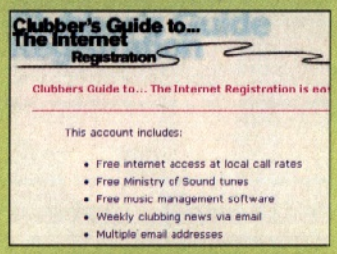
FREE ISP

QUICK TEST

Ministry of Sound

www.ministryofsound.net

IF THE MADCAP exploits of Pete Tong and Boy George get you all hot under the collar, then the Ministry of Sound ISP will no doubt appeal to you. Billed as 'the clubber's guide to the Internet', this ISP will no doubt keep you sweet when you're not dancing all night long in a big room with thousands of other people.



Ease of use ★★★★

Easy-peasy lemon squeezy is all we'll say to that. Just follow the five or so screens, filling in the blanks as necessary, and you're in Internet clubbing heaven in no time, or something. The Ministry of Sound ISP is powered by the giant World Online, and contains a number of heavy influences from the large ISP.

Tech support ★★★

Why should you spend your hard-earned wonga on something so boring as a technical helpline, when there are all manner of clubby outfits you could be buying instead? Unfortunately, you're going to have to do this if you want any help with your new ISP account – online help consists of telling you the phone number. You'll be sorted out once you make that call, though, so we can't complain about that.

Features ★★★★★

Being backed by World Online means that the Ministry of Sound ISP has all of the freebies you'd expect – tons of email addresses and 10Mb of Web space. For some bizarre reason, the address above, which you need to visit to sign up, bears no relation to the MoS Web site itself. Go to **www.ministryofsound.co.uk**, and your clubbing desires will be satiated in no time.

Overall ★★★★

For the large selection of youngsters out there who see dancing in a sweaty, heaving mass as the ideal night out, this will more than suffice. Unfortunately, you don't end up with an @ministryofsound.net email address, but we're sure that simply being connected by the DJ conglomeration will turn most people on enough.

"The Ministry of Sound ISP has all the freebies you'd expect"

NAME AND URL	NO. OF EMAILS	WEB SPACE	NEWS GROUPS	SUPPORT COSTS	64K ISDN	128K ISDN
Sheetmetal.com www.sheetmetal.com	Webmail	None	No	Normal BT rate	No	No
Shetland Internet www.shetland.co.uk	Unlimited	Unlimited	No	-	Yes	Yes
Skynow www.skynow.co.uk	5	25Mb	Yes	25p	Yes	Yes
Smartone www.smartone.co.uk	1	20Mb	Yes	27.23p peak, 8.93p w/e	Yes	No
Sniff Out www.sniffout.net	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	Local BT rate	Yes	Yes
SoNow www.sonow.net	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	50p	No	No
South West Net www.swest.co.uk	Unlimited	25Mb	Yes	National rate	Yes	No
Sparticus.net www.sparticus.net	Unlimited	25Mb	Yes	60p	Yes	Yes
Sprintnet www.sprintnet.co.uk	Unlimited	5Mb	No	-	Yes	Yes
StayFree www.stayfree.co.uk	Unlimited	5Mb	Yes	Normal BT rate	Yes	Yes
StormNet www.storm-online.com	5	50Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	Yes
StrayDuck www.strayduck.com	Unlimited	25Mb	Yes	60p	Yes	Yes
Supanet www.supanet.com	Unlimited	20Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	No
Surf&Save www.surfandsave.co.uk	5	10Mb	Yes	50p	No	No
Surf3 www.surf3.net	Unlimited	15Mb	Yes	75p	Yes	Yes
Surfree www.surfree.co.uk	1	15Mb	No	Normal BT rate	No	No
Telinco www.telinco.co.uk	Unlimited	25Mb	Yes	£1	Yes	Yes
Tellnet www.tellnet.co.uk	Unlimited	25Mb	Yes	Local rate	Yes	Yes
Teqnet www.teqnet.net	Unlimited	20Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	Yes
TescoNet www.tesco.net	5	10Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	No
The Hornets www.thehornets.net	6	20Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	Yes
The Mail www.themail.co.uk	1	50Mb	Yes	60p	No	No
TheFreeInternet www.thefreeinternet.net	Unlimited	5Mb	Yes	£1	Yes	No
Themutual.net www.themutual.net	5	25Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	Yes
The Whale.com www.the-whale.com	5	10Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	Yes
This is it www.thisisit.co.uk	Unlimited	20Mb	Yes	£1	Yes	No
Thrust World www.thrustworld.com	None	None	No	-	Yes	No
Tiny Online www.tinyonline.net	5	15Mb	Yes	50p	Yes	No
Tollon www.tollon.net	5	5Mb	No	50p	Yes	No
Totalise www.totalise.net	Unlimited	20Mb	Yes	Free	Yes	Yes
Totalserve www.totalserve.co.uk	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	50p	Yes	Yes
UK Business Internet www.ukbusinessinternet.co.uk	Unlimited	50Mb	Yes	25p	Yes	Yes
UK Fantastic www.ukfantastic.net	Unlimited	20Mb	Yes	75p	Yes	Yes
UK Online www.ukonline.co.uk	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	25p	Yes	Yes
UK People.Net www.ukpeople.net	Unlimited	25Mb	Yes	75p	No	No
UK2.net http://uk2.net	Unlimited	No	No	-	Yes	No
UK4FREE www.uk4free.net	1	20Mb	Yes	£1	Yes	Yes
UKLinux www.uklinux.net	Unlimited	20Mb	Yes	-	Yes	Yes
UKU www.uku.co.uk	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	75p	Yes	Yes
Ultimate IntoNet www.into-the.net	5	25Mb	Yes	National rate	Yes	Yes
Uni Net www.uni-net.co.uk	1	No	No	-	Yes	No
Unisonfree www.unisonfree.net	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	25p	Yes	No
Velnet www.velnet.com	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	75p	Yes	Yes
VeryFree.net www.veryfree.net	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	National rate	Yes	No
VFree www.vossnet.co.uk	Unlimited	15Mb	Yes	Local rate	No	No
VirginNet www.virgin.net	5	10Mb	Yes	Local rate	Yes	No
Vispa www.vispa.co.uk	Unlimited	15Mb	Yes	32p peak, 22p off-peak	Yes	Yes
Vodafone.net www.vodafone.net	2	No	No	60p	Yes	No
Waitrose.com www.waitrose.com	Unlimited	20Mb	Yes	Free	Yes	No
Waterstones http://waterstones.yahoo.co.uk	Unlimited Webmail	No	No	50p	Yes	No
WEBLeicester www.webleicester.co.uk	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	Normal BT rate	Yes	Yes

IN ASSOCIATION WITH www.net4nowt.com net4nowt

NAME AND URL	NO. OF EMAILS	WEB SPACE	NEWS GROUPS	SUPPORT COSTS	64K ISDN	128K ISDN
Webtribe www.webtribe.net	Unlimited	10Mb	Yes	-	Yes	Yes
Welshnet www.welshnet.co.uk	Unlimited	25Mb	Yes	25p	Yes	No
WH Smith www.whsmith.co.uk	Unlimited	12Mb	No	50p	Yes	No
WidWeb Internet www.widweb.co.uk	Unlimited Webmail	1 page	No	50p	Yes	Yes
Wireplay www.gameplay.com/wireplay	No	No	No	50p	No	No
World Online www.worldonline.co.uk	Unlimited	12Mb	Yes	50p	No	No
X-Stream www.x-stream.com	10	50Mb	No	Free	Yes	No
YahooOnline www.yahoo.co.uk/yahooclick/infopages	Unlimited Webmail	No	No	50p	Yes	No
Zoom www.zoom.co.uk	Unlimited	20Mb	Yes	25p	Yes	No

PAY ISPs

WANT TO PAY FOR YOUR SERVICE PROVIDER AND BE ASSURED OF TOP QUALITY ACCESS? HERE ARE SOME OF THE BEST...

NAME AND URL	NO. OF EMAILS	WEB SPACE	COST (P/M)	SUPPORT COSTS	64K ISDN	128K ISDN
AOL www.aol.co.uk	7	35Mb	£9.99	Free	No	No
BT Internet www.btinternet.com	5	10Mb	£9.99	50p	Yes	Yes
Cablenet www.cablenet.net	Unlimited	50Mb	From £4.95	Normal BT rate	Yes	No
CIX www.cix.co.uk	Unlimited	5Mb	From £6.25	Local rate	Yes	Yes
CompuServe www.compuserve.co.uk	7	10Mb	£7.50	National rate	No	No
Demon www.demon.net	Unlimited	20Mb	£11.75	Local rate	Yes	Yes
DirectConnection www.dircon.net	Unlimited	20Mb	From £4.70	Local rate	Yes	Yes
Easynet www.easynet.co.uk	Unlimited	Unlimited	£11.99	Local rate	No	No
Entanet www.enta.net	Unlimited	20Mb	£59 per year	National rate	Yes	Yes
KingstonInternet www.kingston-internet.net	Unlimited	20Mb	From £5	Normal BT rate	Yes	No
Netkonect www.netkonect.net	Unlimited	Unlimited	From £199	National rate	No	No
Nildram www.nildram.net	Unlimited	25Mb	From £5.88	Normal BT rate	No	No
PIPEXDial www.dial.pipex.com	5	50Mb	£15	National rate	No	No
SAQInternet www.saqnet.co.uk	Unlimited	5Mb	£114 per year	National rate	Yes	Yes
U-NET www.u-net.net	Unlimited	25Mb	£12	Local rate	Yes	Yes
Which? Online www.which.net	5	5Mb	£7.75	£1	No	No
ZooInternet www.zoo.co.uk	2	5Mb	from £6.95	National rate	Yes	No

ISP NEWS BYTES

HEY, YOU, GET OFF OF OUR LINES

After the recent debacle involving Breathe controversially cutting off some 750 users for 'overuse' of the service they'd signed up for, our hearts have been saddened by yet more news of ISPs doing likewise. First up, Freeserve (**www.freeserve.net**) has warned that some subscribers are using the service for more than 16 hours a day. This has led the ISP giant to surmise that these unscrupulous types could perhaps be using their unmetered access for business use, which was never part of the deal really. TheFreeInternet (**www.thefreeinternet.net**) has been much more explicit in its condemnation of punters using its unmetered service for commercial use. In an email to customers, the ISP says that the service "is for personal home use only – commercial users will have their accounts terminated without notice". While we fully accept that you shouldn't really sign up for a home account if you're using it for business purposes, the worry still remains that some innocent people are losing out through this. So, beware, unmetered only means that you get access until your ISP decides that you're using it too much.

PRICES SET TO RISE FOR REDHOTANT WANNABES

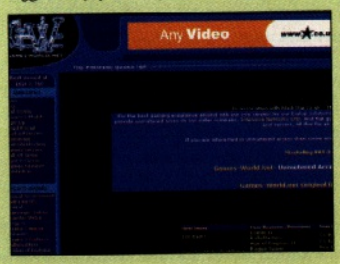
Much maligned freecall ISP RedHotAnt (**www.redhotant.com**) has revealed plans to raise subscription fees to its service. Punters wishing to join any of the RedHotAnt services will now have to shell out a joining fee of £40, something of a rise from the previous fiver. What's more, the annual cost of the 'basic' service, which offers the standard off-peak fayre, has risen to £30 a year. The 'superior' package, with 24/7 access, has also risen by 50%, to £90 a year. Existing customers are, however, able to renew their subscription at the original rate they signed up for. Let's hope that this extra money is going towards helping the service improve.

FREE ISP QUICK TEST

Games-world.net

www.games-world.net

THIS SERVICE AIMS to please those who still insist on playing games on your PC, instead of using it for educational and informative purposes, like what we do. Make no mistake, this is one mighty service indeed, and will tempt even the biggest killjoy into trying online gaming.



Ease of use ★★★★

Any niggles we had with signing up to this mighty ISP are so minor that we've forgotten them in the rush to start fiddling about with servers and playing online. It's worth doing as well, for you can then start doing all kinds of much more complicated things, like booking Games-world.net servers to play online. You can even view your email as either a Web-based or a POP3 account.

Tech support ★★★★

You can tell that this is an ISP aimed for younger members of society weaned on the Net by the fact that there's no hint of a technical helpline number, or indeed any phone number at all. Instead, you'll have to rely on reams of technical data on tons of subjects, although you could always email the bods at Games-world.net and beg them to sort you out that way.

Features ★★★★★

If you're of the gaming inclination, you really can't go wrong with this. As well as all the usual boring Web space and email things, we think the real selling point is the unrivalled access to games, hints, tips and shared gaming experiences. Also, the ability to book your own server for fun and frolics with a friend will keep many a punter happy.

Overall ★★★★

This is definitely the service for anyone keen to use their modem to play the latest version of Quake with like-minded individuals from far and wide. It isn't terribly easy to figure out your way around, but we get the impression that the service hasn't been aimed at your virgins anyway.

"If you're of the gaming inclination, you can't go wrong with this"

Buyer's Guide

DON'T BUY A COMPUTER AND LET IT GATHER DUST ON YOUR DESK. IMPROVE YOUR INTERNET EXPERIENCE WITH THESE GREAT ADD-ONS

Buying new hardware and software for your PC or Mac can be a tricky task. You often have to choose between products which cost the same price and offer identical features. What's more, high street shops often encourage you to buy the most expensive products – even though they may be unsuitable for you.

This is why we've compiled the Buyer's Guide. It's been written especially with Net users in mind, and features products, all organised by type, that enhance your Web surfing experience.

The kinds of products we look at include external modems, Webcams, WYSIWYG designers, graphics packages, software, hardware and MP3 players. Since we've rigorously tested every product we can tell you each one's plus and minus points. We've published more detailed reports on these products in the past, so if you want more information about any one, take a note of the issue number shown at the top of each section, then turn to page 145 or call **01202 200200** to order a back copy.

The information here is updated every month. Please note, however, that the prices shown are here are guide ones provided by the manufacturers, so shop around to find the very best deal.

EXTERNAL MODEMS (REVIEWED IN ISSUE 35)

Diamond Supra Express 56e Pro

Price
£59

Contact
01189 444400 www.diamondmm.co.uk

What's good?
Super modem – easy to install. Uses Shotgun technology, giving much faster connections.

What's bad?
There's little we could find wrong, except the lack of 25-pin COM port connector cables.

Overall ★★★★★

Elsa Microlink 56k Internet

Price
£60

Contact
08000 563445 www.elsa.com

What's good?
The Microlink 56k supports V.90 and K56flex formats, and has a natty answerphone facility.

What's bad?
The documentation, especially the instruction manual, is poor.

Overall ★★★★★

3Com / US Robotics 56k

Price
£100

Contact
0800 731 1064 www.3com.co.uk

What's good?
A basic, no-nonsense modem that achieves good speeds in V.90 mode.

What's bad?
Compared with other, similar spec modems, it proves quite expensive.

Overall ★★★

Zoom 2987U Faxmodem 56K USB

Price
£70

Contact
0870 720 0060 www.zoom.com

What's good?
A good value USB modem that performs well under rigorous connection tests.

What's bad?
The initial installation is slow and over-complex.

Overall ★★★★

Accura 56k Speakerphone

Price
£99.95

Contact
0870 720 0060 www.hayes.co.uk

What's good?
A reasonable modem that doubles up as a fax machine and speakerphone.

What's bad?
Doesn't install easily on Windows 98, and is far more expensive than similar-spec models.

Overall ★★★★

KEYBOARDS (REVIEWED IN ISSUE 36)

IBM Rapid Access II

Price
£29.38

Contact
0870 0102512 www.pc.ibm.com/uk

What's good?
Designed for maximum typing comfort, with five customisable 'hot key' buttons.

What's bad?
You can only customise a handful of hotkeys.

Overall ★★★★★

Logitech Cordless Desktop Deluxe

Price
£79.99

Contact
01753 870900 www.logitech.com/uk

What's good?
A cordless keyboard and mouse combination so you can work away from your PC.

What's bad?
It's a bit expensive. Do you know anyone who'd spend almost 80 notes on a keyboard?

Overall ★★★★

Logitech Deluxe

Price
£14.99

Contact
01753 870900 www.logitech.com/uk

What's good?
Typing is comfortable, and there are a bunch of customisable 'hot keys'.

What's bad?
There aren't many features on offer, and we found the keys to be 'wobbly' on occasions.

Overall ★★★

Chicony KB-2971

Price
£15

Contact
www.chicony.com

What's good?
The KB-2971 is great to use, and the keys are weighted perfectly.

What's bad?
There are no fancy extras, and the lack of a palm rest is a concern.

Overall ★★★★

Belkin Multimedia keyboard

Price
£24.99

Contact
01635 573600 www.belkin.com

What's good?
Has tons of extra buttons for Web operations and multimedia applications.

What's bad?
The software is poor, while the keys are flimsy and the palm rest detaches itself.

Overall ★★★

MP3 PLAYERS (REVIEWED IN ISSUE 37)

Diamond Rio 500

Practical internet BEST BUY ★★★★★

Price
From £162

Contact
01189 444400 www.diamondmm.co.uk

What's good?
Elegant and powerful, the Diamond comes equipped with 64Mb memory.

What's bad?
The price. The same money will buy you a portable MiniDisc deck.

Overall ★★★★★

LG MF-PD330

Price
£130

Contact
0181 202 1919 www.lge.co.kr

What's good?
The LG has a remote control unit comes supplied with two 16 Mb memory cards.

What's bad?
The software is basic and only deals with the transfer of MP3 files with a printer port cable.

Overall ★★★★★

Philex Mpress3

Price
£150

Contact
0181 202 1919 www.philex.com

What's good?
Can record via a built-in microphone and downloads MP3 files quickly.

What's bad?
There's really not a lot to it and it could be cheaper priced.

Overall ★★★★★

Saehan MP-F20

Price
£100

Contact
01234 344206 www.mp-man.co.uk

What's good?
The original MP3 player holds its own and can contain data other than MP3 files.

What's bad?
File transfer is slow and the lack of features shows the player's age.

Overall ★★★★

Pine D-Music

Price
£129

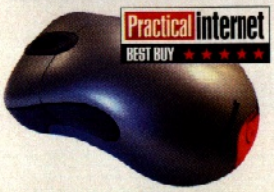
Contact
01908 218812 www.pine-dmusic.com

What's good?
There are plenty of features and the display on the player is good.

What's bad?
Painfully slow transfer of files and voice recording is decidedly low-fi.

Overall ★★★★

COMPUTER MICE (REVIEWED IN ISSUE 38)



Microsoft Intellimouse Explorer

Practical internet BEST BUY ★★★★★

Price
£50

Contact
0345 000 2000 www.microsoft.com

What's good?
What isn't? A great Net-savvy mouse which uses optical sensors instead of a ball.

What's bad?
The elegant right-handed design is unsuitable for left-handed people.

Overall ★★★★★

Kensington Webracer

Price
£50

Contact
0800 252 359 www.kensington.com

What's good?
The touchpad-driven device is great for everyday Web use and writing email.

What's bad?
It's quite big and chunky, and is less useful for word processing and general office work.

Overall ★★★★

Logic 3 Scroll Mouse

Price
£12.99

Contact
0208 902 2211 www.spectravideo.co.uk

What's good?
A simple mouse that can be configured for left- or right-handed use.

What's bad?
Even though the Scroll Mouse uses USB, it isn't Mac compatible.

Overall ★★★★

Logitech Cordless MouseMan Wheel

Price
£50

Contact
01306 734400 www.logitech.com

What's good?
An excellent cordless mouse which can be easily reconfigured.

What's bad?
The PC-only MouseMan Wheel isn't the cheapest mouse around.

Overall ★★★★

Lindy 4D Internet Mouse

Price
£13

Contact
n/a www.lindy.co.uk

What's good?
The 4D Mouse features two scroll wheels compared to the usual one.

What's bad?
The mouse feels flimsy. The USB drivers are PC only, so it won't work with your iMac.

Overall ★★★★

SCANNERS (REVIEWED IN ISSUE 40)

Microtek ScanMaker 3600

Price
£81.08

Contact
01782 753300 www.microtek.nl

What's good?
Excellent value for money, easy to set up and good for first time buyers.

What's bad?
There's no 'descreen' mode for producing clean scans from printed material.

Overall ★★★★

Practical internet BEST BUY ★★★★★

AgfaSnapscan Touch

Price
£99

Contact
0208 231 4903 www.agfa.co.uk

What's good?
Installation is straightforward and 'descreening' is automatic.

What's bad?
The PhotoGenie control has a tendency to over-expose pictures.

Overall ★★★★★

Practical internet BEST BUY ★★★★★

Canon FB630u

Price
£116

Contact
0121 680 8062 www.canon.co.uk

What's good?
The Canon is nice and compact and works on both Mac and PC.

What's bad?
There's very little wrong with this, although it could be a bit cheaper.

Overall ★★★★★

HP ScanJet 5300C

Price
£129

Contact
01344 360000 www.hp.com

What's good?
Colour reproduction, contrast range and captured detail are all impressive.

What's bad?
Little manual control offered and it's not the best value on the market.

Overall ★★★★

Epson Perfecto 610

Price
£119

Contact
0800 220546 www.epson.co.uk

What's good?
Connectivity is impressive and the ScanJet has number of user-definable buttons.

What's bad?
Not the most flexible of machines considering the price tag.

Overall ★★★★

PCMCIA MODEMS (REVIEWED IN ISSUE 41)

Zoom PC Card 56k Dual Mode

Price
£79.99

Contact
0870 720 0060 www.zoom.com

What's good?
The cheapest modem on test, and the most reliable and easiest to install.

What's bad?
Supplied software is for Windows only.

Overall ★★★★

Eicon Diva Mobile V.90 Card

Price
£229

Contact
0208 967 8080 www.eicom.com

What's good?
The Eicon provides impressive performance and boasts an ISDN-2 terminal adaptor.

What's bad?
It's an expensive luxury.

Overall ★★★★

Xircom RealPort 56 Card

Price
£141

Contact
01256 332552 www.xircom.com

What's good?
It's neither cheap nor expensive, so the Xircom is a middle-of-the-range modem.

What's bad?
Very lacklustre in performance and the speaker appeared to be faulty.

Overall ★★★

Psion Dacom Gold Card Global 56k

Price
£199

Contact
01908 261 686 www.psiondacom.com

What's good?
The Dacom is very user friendly and easy to install.

What's bad?
Not great value for money and refused to connect to one of our test ISPs at V.90.

Overall ★★★★

Hayes Optima V.90

Price
£209

Contact
0870 720 0060 www.hayes.co.uk

What's good?
Plenty of features and easy to install. The Optima provided reasonable speeds.

What's bad?
Didn't integrate well with all ISPs and expensive for what you get.

Overall ★★★

CD WRITERS (REVIEWED IN ISSUE 42)

Memorex CDRW-6424

Price
£199

Contact
0208 990 6600 www.memorexlive.com

What's good?
Fast for a recordable drive, supports packet writing and features CD-Text.

What's bad?
The supplied software is an older version of Adaptec's Easy CD Creator.

Overall ★★★★

Philips PCRW404K

Price
£151.58

Contact
0208 689 4444 www.pcstuff.philips.com

What's good?
A stylish drive, easy to install and very user-friendly, bundled with easy to use software.

What's bad?
Not the fastest drive on the market with a modest 4x speed, CD-Text isn't supported either.

Overall ★★★★

HP CD-Writer Plus 9310I

Price
£189

Contact
01344 360000 www.hp.com

What's good?
Burns CD-Rs at a lightning quick 10x speed and CD-RWs at 4x speed.

What's bad?
The supplied software is an older version, but little else to complain about.

Overall ★★★★★

Iomega ZipCD 650

Price
£229

Contact
0207 365 9527 www.iomega-europe.com

What's good?
The nicest drive has a USB interface that allows easy connection to either a PC or Mac.

What's bad?
Among the slowest writers tested, the ZipCD doesn't support packet writing or CD-Text.

Overall ★★★

Creative Labs CD-Studio

Price
£179

Contact
01189 344744 www.europe.creative.co.uk

What's good?
A fast drive with excellent audio capabilities comes bundled with excellent software.

What's bad?
The CD-Rom drive speed is slow and doesn't yet support Easy CD Creator.

Overall ★★★

DIGITAL CAMERAS (REVIEWED IN ISSUE 43)

Premier Electronics MDC-800

Price
£264.38

Contact
01992 634 652 www.premierelect.co.uk

What's good?
Good value and produces perfectly acceptable pictures for email attachments or Web pages.

What's bad?
Cheap and tacky to look at, this camera has a fixed lens and no zoom.

Overall ★★★

Agfa CL18

Price
£119

Contact
0208 231 4903 www.agfa.co.uk

What's good?
Compact and cheap, this camera is very Internet friendly.

What's bad?
There's no macro or zoom lens and the memory supplied is pretty low.

Overall ★★★★★

Kodak DC215 Zoom

Price
£249.99

Contact
0870 430270 www.kodak.co.uk

What's good?
The DC215 offers high resolution pictures and also comes with a 2x optical zoom lens.

What's bad?
The serial port connection is painfully slow compared with the other cameras.

Overall ★★★★

Epson PhotoPC 650

Price
£191

Contact
0800 220 546 www.epson.co.uk

What's good?
There's a sizeable 8Mb memory card that will accommodate 88 640x480 pictures.

What's bad?
There's no USB port and the 650m isn't the most elegant camera tested.

Overall ★★★★

Canon Powershot S10

Price
£600

Contact
0121 680 8062 www.canon.co.uk

What's good?
The best pictures by far from the most expensive camera tested at 2.1 megapixels.

What's bad?
Incredbly no USB port for such an expensive model.

Overall ★★★★

MONITORS (REVIEWED IN ISSUE 44)

CTX VL710T

Price
£193.88

Contact
01943 810800 www.ctxeurope.com

What's good?
A well priced monitor with no onscreen flicker. It benefits from a fairly flat screen.

What's bad?
It has few connections and no USB hub that's featured on pricier models.

Overall ★★★★

Practical internet BEST BUY ★★★★★

ADI MicroScan

Price
£269.08

Contact
020 8327 1900 www.adieurope.com

What's good?
A pleasantly-styled monitor with a built-in microphone. It has a four-port USB hub.

What's bad?
Expensive – but that's the price of buying a top quality monitor.

Overall ★★★★★

Ilyama A705MT

Price
£245.56

Contact
01438 745482 www.ilyama.co.uk

What's good?
You get the option of buying a monitor stand that incorporates a USB hub.

What's bad?
Features are thin on the ground and the user interface is not very 'friendly'.

Overall ★★★★

Sony E200

Price
£276.13

Contact
0990 424424 www.sony-europe.com

What's good?
This monitor boasts a 17-inch flat screen tube and very easy-to-use onscreen menus.

What's bad?
No microphones and no hubs. The screen refresh rate at max res is a flickery 65Hz.

Overall ★★★★

Philips 107B

Price
£276.13

Contact
0208 689 4444 www.pcstuff.philips.com

What's good?
A compact 17-inch monitor, you can alter the screen settings from Windows.

What's bad?
The screen is not completely flat and thus some errors are introduced. It's also pricey.

Overall ★★★★

WAP PHONES (REVIEWED IN ISSUE 45)

Sony CMD–Z5

Price
£150

Contact
0990 111999 www.sony.co.uk

What's good?
Very small and compact. Capable of viewing HTML pages. Decent email facility.

What's bad?
Display is probably just too small for comfort. Not all WAP sites can be viewed.

Overall ★★★★

Mitsubishi Trium Geo@

Price
£100

Contact
01707 276100 www.trium-gsm.com

What's good?
First WAP phone in UK to offer 'prepay' package. Easy navigation. Reliable.

What's bad?
The phone itself might be big, but the display isn't. Tacky and lightweight build.

Overall ★★★★

Motorola TimePort P7389

Price
£140

Contact
0500 555555 www.mot.com

What's good?
Infra-red port to communicate with PC or PDA. Battery life and audio quality are good.

What's bad?
No joypad or anything. Confused display. Bookmarking sites is really complicated.

Overall ★★★

Siemens C35

Price
£20-£30

Contact
0345 400700 www.siemens.co.uk

What's good?
Well-designed menus, simple navigation buttons. Easy to bookmark.

What's bad?
Only capable of displaying three lines of text. Big and chunky handset.

Overall ★★★★

Practical internet BEST BUY ★★★★★

Nokia 7110

Price
£100-£130

Contact
0990 002110 www.nokia.com

What's good?
Large screen, which is always clear and readable. NaviRoller is perfect for navigation.

What's bad?
There are cheaper handsets on the market. Apart from that, nowt.

Overall ★★★★★

PDAS (REVIEWED IN ISSUE 47)

HP Jornada 545

Price
£369

Contact
08705 474747 www.hp.com/jornada

What's good?
Handy for transferring files or images quickly. Fairly quick processor inside.

What's bad?
Has a Type-1 slot, so is incompatible with some devices. Not enough RAM on board.

Overall ★★★★

Palm Inc Palm V

Price
£249

Contact
020 7365 9820 www.palm.com

What's good?
Inexpensive. The 'grafitti' handwriting recognition tool works exceptionally well.

What's bad?
Uninspiring display. RAM isn't backed up, so backing up is essential for keeping data.

Overall ★★★★

Nokia p110i Communicator

Price
£280

Contact
0990 002110 www.nokia.com

What's good?
Cellphone is built-in. Crisp, high-resolution display is nothing short of superb.

What's bad?
The cellular functionality is somewhat behind the times these days.

Overall ★★★★

Practical internet BEST BUY ★★★★★

Handspring Visor Deluxe

Price
£199

Contact
020 7309 0314 www.handspring.com

What's good?
Stunning design. Highly expandable. Good value for money.

What's bad?
Resolution of display isn't as crisp or sharp as with other PDAs.

Overall ★★★★★

Psion Series 5MX

Price
£429

Contact
0990 143050 www.series5mx.com

What's good?
Nifty greyscale display. The 5mx keyboard is the best around at the moment.

What's bad?
Much more expensive than other, similarly featured, PDAs on the market.

Overall ★★★★★

WEB SITE DESIGN PACKAGES (REVIEWED IN ISSUE 37)

HoTMetaL Pro

Price
£99

Contact
020 8387 4110 www.hotmetalpro.com

What's good?
With a host of extras at your disposal, HoTMetal Pro uses drag and drop at its best.

What's bad?
Not as slick as some of the more expensive, big packages.

Overall ★★★★★

Adobe GoLive 4

Price
£229

Contact
020 8606 4000 www.adobe.co.uk

What's good?
A superb page designer with an easy to use interface. One of the best.

What's bad?
A bit on the expensive side, really. Apart from that, nothing whatsoever.

Overall ★★★★

FrontPage 2000

Price
£113

Contact
0345 002000 www.microsoft.com

What's good?
Based on the well-known Office 2000 interface. Great tool for creating Web sites.

What's bad?
The standard Office 2000 problems – half hidden, expanding menus.

Overall ★★★

DreamWeaver 3

Price
£299

Contact
020 8358 5857 www.macromedia.com

What's good?
Just about the industry standard WYSIWYG package at the moment. Great.

What's bad?
Not what you'd call cheap. A bit daunting for the beginner.

Overall ★★★★★

NetObjects Fusion 5

Price
£205 + VAT

Contact
0800 0289851 www.netobjects.co.uk

What's good?
Tries to get your business online quickly and easily. Copes with advanced features.

What's bad?
Doesn't let you edit HTML. Very template-driven all the way.

Overall ★★★★

MP3 PLAYER SOFTWARE (REVIEWED IN ISSUE 38)

Winamp

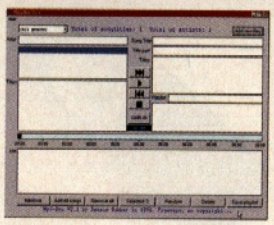
Price
Free

Contact
www.winamp.com

What's good?
The best you can get. Intuitive point and click interface, and it's free.

What's bad?
Not much, when all is said and done. Doesn't look quite as nice as Sonique on first glance.

Overall ★★★★★



MP3 Box

Price
Free

Contact
www.zdnet.co.uk

What's good?
Stripped down MP3 playing.

What's bad?
Rubbish. Doesn't seem to work. Doesn't even look nice.

Overall ★★

MusicMatch JukeBox 4

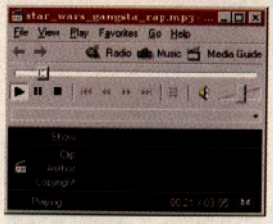
Price
$29.99

Contact
www.musicmatch.com

What's good?
Works as an integrated musical system for your PC.

What's bad?
You actually have to pay money if you want the full version.

Overall ★★★



Windows Media Player

Price
Free

Contact
www.microsoft.com

What's good?
It plays all kinds of formats and is simple and easy to use.

What's bad?
Doesn't look great. Quite basic features.

Overall ★★★

Sonique

Price
Free

Contact
www.sonique.com

What's good?
Looks beautiful. Plays just about any kind of sound format. Skinnable.

What's bad?
A bit on the buggy side.

Overall ★★★★

WEB ANIMATION PACKAGES (REVIEWED IN ISSUE 47)

LiveMotion 1.0

Price
£189+VAT

Contact
www.adobe.com

What's good?
Intuitive. Easy to get to grips with. Outputs SWF files. Has the standard Adobe interface.

What's bad?
Not quite as powerful as its Macromedia equivalent.

Overall ★★★★

Director 8

Price
£799

Contact
www.macromedia.com

What's good?
Unparalleled range of features. Capable of doing quite incredible things.

What's bad?
Not what you could ever call cheap. For experts only really.

Overall ★★★★

SWiSH 1.51

Price
$30 (approx £20)

Contact
www.swishzone.com

What's good?
Dead dead cheap. Lets you create Flash files quickly and easily.

What's bad?
Only works with text. Limited features.

Overall ★★★★

Flash 5

Practical internet BEST BUY ★★★★★

Price
£259

Contact
www.macromedia.com

What's good?
Impressive and powerful program. Creates animations and menus with tiny files.

What's bad?
The interface takes a bit of getting used to, and may infuriate newcomers.

Overall ★★★★★

LiveStage 1.0

Price
$300 (approx £200)

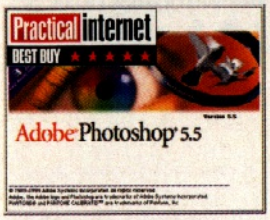
Contact
www.totallyhip.com

What's good?
Capable of excellent results. Uses something other than the Flash format.

What's bad?
Confusing interface. Not really that cheap.

Overall ★★★★

WEB GRAPHICS PACKAGES



Adobe Photoshop 5.5

Price
£480

Contact
020 8606 4000 www.adobe.co.uk

What's good?
The greatest graphics program on the go, bar none. Unparalleled level of features.

What's bad?
Very, very expensive. Doesn't do much more for the beginner than other packages.

Overall ★★★★★

Photo Objects 50,000

Price
£59.99

Contact
01256 707767 www.hemera.com

What's good?
Brilliant collection of photographs, all vector-based, so you can blow them up to any size.

What's bad?
For 60 quid, what else do you want?

Overall ★★★★★

Fireworks 3

Price
£139

Contact
020 8358 5857 www.macromedia.com

What's good?
Very tasty at helping you make animated GIFs for menus and general Web site niceness.

What's bad?
Again, a tad on the pricey side. Quite overpowering for the beginner.

Overall ★★★★

Jasc Paint Shop Pro 7.0

Price
£79.95

Contact
01295 258335 www.digitalworkshop.co.uk

What's good?
Cheap, user-friendly and easy to use. A dream for those new to the world of graphics.

What's bad?
Doesn't offer the same depth of features as Photoshop 5.5.

Overall ★★★★

Adobe Illustrator 9.0

Price
£111

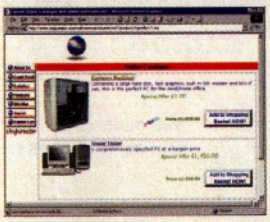
Contact
020 8606 4000 www.adobe.co.uk

What's good?
The vector graphics creation package of choice. Exceedingly powerful. Quite cheap.

What's bad?
Takes a good while to get the better of.

Overall ★★★★

ECOMMERCE PACKAGES (REVIEWED IN ISSUE 41)



Shopcreator

Price
£233.82

Contact
0845 1211400 www.shopcreator.co.uk

What's good?
Lots of features. Very easy to use.

What's bad?
It uses a Web-based system that is incredibly slow to use.

Overall ★★★

ecBuilder

Price
£125 + VAT

Contact
01628 587777 www.ecbuilder.co.uk

What's good?
An easy fill-in-the-blands approach, with lots of features and options.

What's bad?
No password protection on data files.

Overall ★★★★

WebShop

Price
£468.83

Contact
020 7689 9797 www.cossax.com

What's good?
Lots of features. Assistants help you design the Web site.

What's bad?
Transparent backgrounds of GIFs altered and made ugly.

Overall ★★★★

Shopping Cart Professional

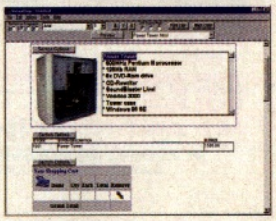
Price
£188

Contact
www.webgenie.com

What's good?
Can read in product lists and automatically create product lists.

What's bad?
Poor interface design, not very intuitive. Not for novices.

Overall ★★



VirtualShop

Price
£49.99

Contact
020 8677 4548 www.virtualshop.co.uk

What's good?
Very cheap and reasonably easy to use. Good for small business.

What's bad?
Limited features, no stock control, colour, size options and so on.

Overall ★★★

DOWNLOAD MANAGERS (REVIEWED IN ISSUE 43)

NetZip Download Demon

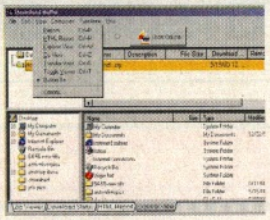
Price
$29.99

Contact
www.netzip.com/products/info_demon.html

What's good?
More than enough features to be getting on with. Sexy interface.

What's bad?
Not as good as Go!Zilla. Prone to odd glitches. Close, but no cigar.

Overall ★★★★



Download Butler

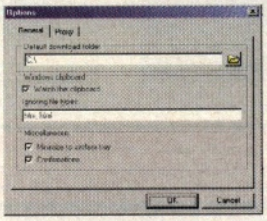
Price
$29.99

Contact
www.lincolnbeach.com/butler.asp

What's good?
A whole load of unique features. Very easy to set up.

What's bad?
Complex and poorly designed.

Overall ★



Mass Downloader

Price
Free

Contact
www.geocities.com/siliconvalley/vista/2865/md

What's good?
It's simple to use and significantly speeds up your downloads.

What's bad?
Features are thin on the ground and the user interface is not very 'friendly'.

Overall ★★★★

Go!Zilla

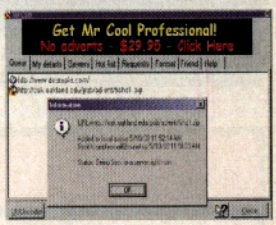
Price
Free

Contact
www.gozilla.com

What's good?
A truly wonderful free download manager that outperforms costly programs by a country mile.

What's bad?
Doesn't speed up your download time.

Overall ★★★★★



Mr Cool

Price
Free

Contact
www. netservs.com/mrcool

What's good?
An interesting idea that should make the download process more bearable.

What's bad?
Appaling interface, difficult to use. We couldn't get it to work.

Overall ★★

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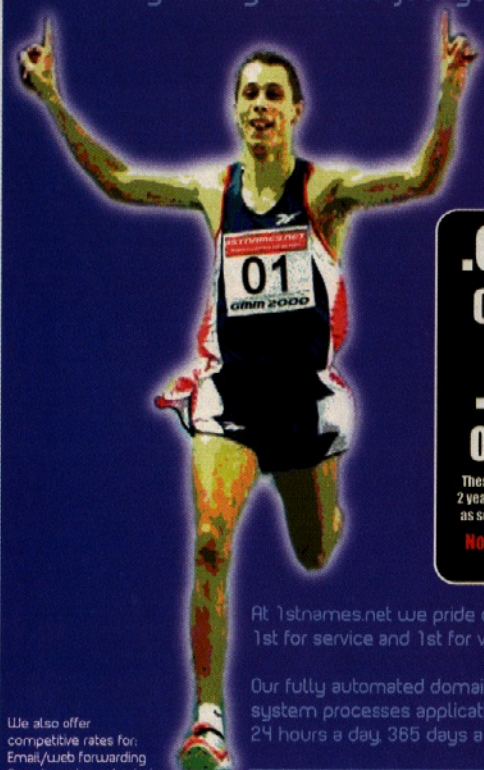

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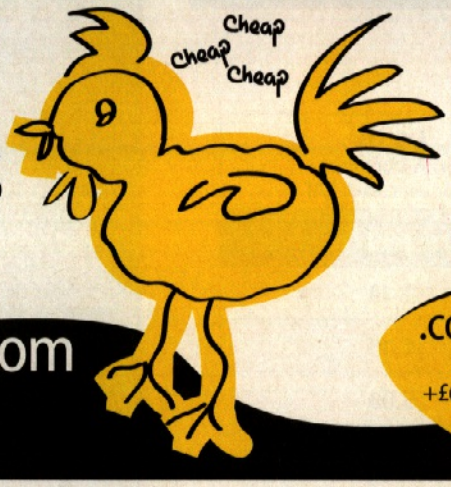

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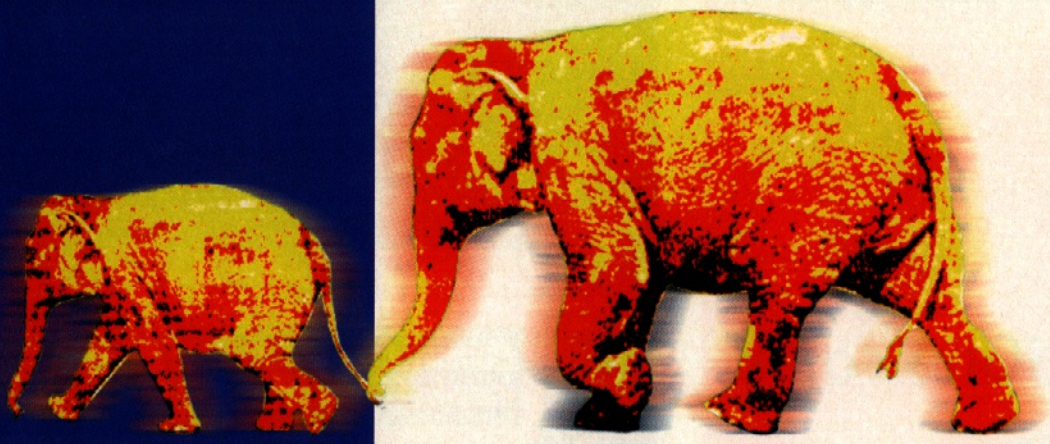

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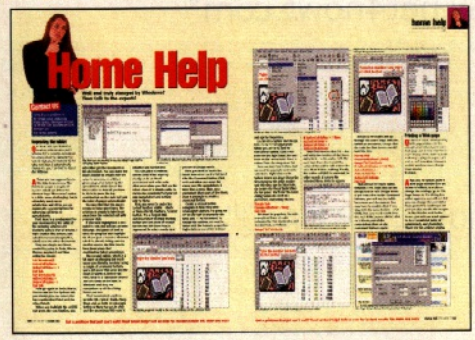

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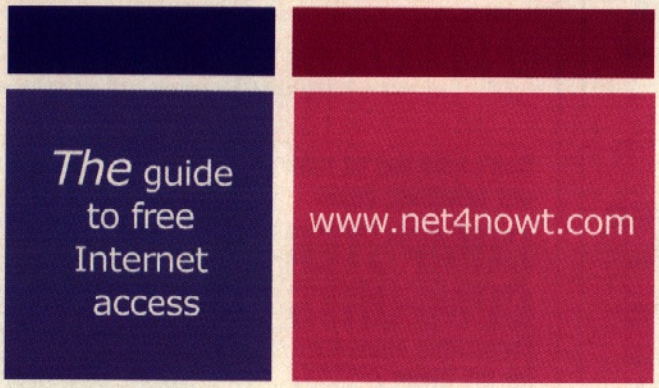

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STORM IN A D-CUP?

FERGUS SHEPPARD DISHES THE DIRT ON PORNSWEEPER

The subterranean world of electronic workplace surveillance has taken a fresh twist with the release of a morally upright software package that can actually scan for nude pictures.

Called PornSweeper, the device is, the makers say, able to study email image attachments and work out if the enclosed picture might be pornographic. It does this by detecting skin colour – and working out how much of the skin in the image is clothed.

I haven't tested this product so cannot vouch for its sleaze-busting powers. But I suspect many IT managers might be tempted to trial it and see if corporate mail servers are in fact a sorting office of depraved images.

Companies are right to be serious about what hitches a ride on their email system. The threat of virus infection – underlined by the runaway success of LoveBug earlier this year – shows what happens if you leave your defensive shields down. Porn is obviously equally serious, and circulation of explicit images has led to numerous cases of companies firing employees for misuse of their computer systems.

Creations like Pornsweeper address the fact that unsavoury images can be hard to track. Office email sentinels can impound huge incoming movie clips along with various banned attachments, but scouring every jpeg, gif or bitmap is an administrative nightmare – before you even get into the privacy dimension.

While I tip my hat to the ingenuity of PornSweeper, there might be two other ways to tackle this problem. First – simply remind employees that office email is, curiously, primarily intended for work use. Second, spell out to staff exactly what misuse of work computers means.

Many employees – and I'll plead to this too – have regarded private use of their work email as a kind of constitutional right, the withdrawal of which constitutes a grotesque miscarriage of justice.

Until a political party is swept to office defending the right of employees to send each other compressed movie clips of stuffed cats being kicked across lawns, I suspect warning staff to remember who owns the email system could be as effective as any electronic bloodhound invented.

*Fergus Sheppard is Online Editor for the ITN Web site, part of ITN New Media. For the latest multimedia news, visit the ITN site at **www.itn.co.uk**.*

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